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THE MOOSE TURNED AND LOOKED AT THEM

\MPING ON GREAT LAKES

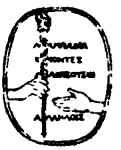
BY

AYMOND S. SPEARS

AUTHOR OF

"CAMPING ON THE GREAT RIVER"

ILLUSTRATED



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[See p. 330

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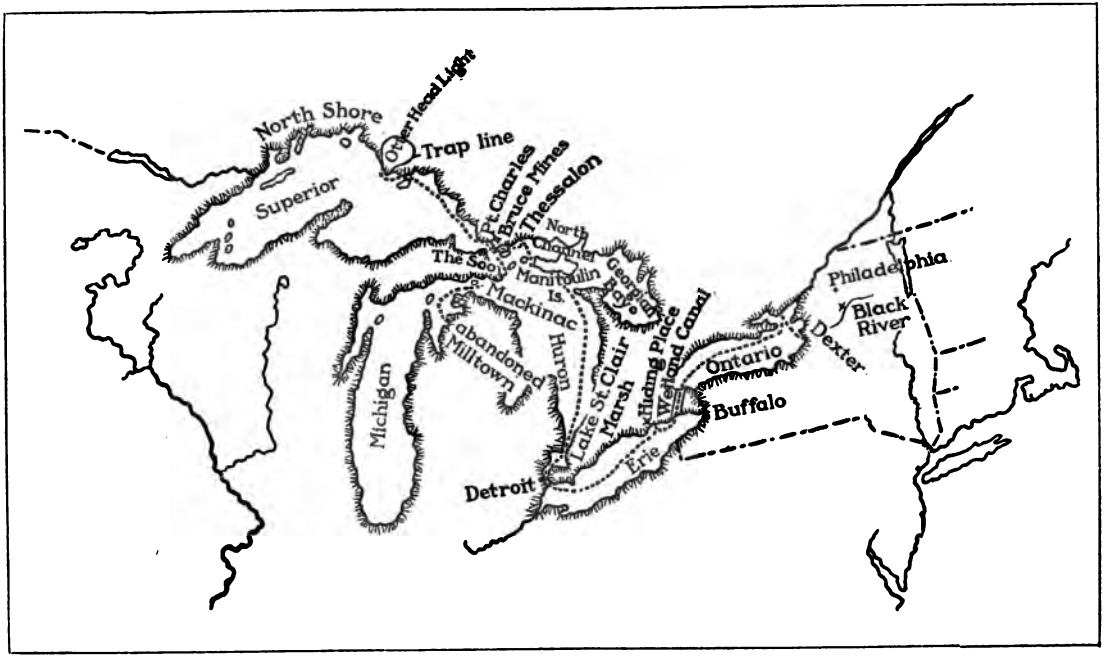
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CAMPING ON THE GREAT LAKES

I

"LITTLE BOY BLUE"

SUDDENLY in the distance a horn blew. The boys who had been throwing stones down Indian River stopped and listened.

"What's that?" exclaimed one of the leaders. Again the horn sounded. Only one knew what it meant. That one was Miles Breton, a boy paler and more slender than the others. He flushed scarlet, and, turning away slowly, climbed the rough bank toward his home.

"Well, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Cork Arden. "He used to be called by a whistle. Now it's a horn."

"I wouldn't go!" Jug Macdougal exclaimed.

"You'd be spanked if you didn't," Cork

remonstrated. "Bad boys are always spanked, you know."

"How long has he had that horn—I hadn't heard of it before?" asked Bill Sayne—registered at school as William McPeter Sayne, of Hinckley, N. Y.

"I heard it last night and wondered what it was," a younger boy said.

"Wonder what was the matter with that dog whistle he used to have?"

"Perhaps Miles couldn't hear him far enough," some one suggested, with a laugh. "Look at Miles scramble. Hurry, Miles, or you'll be late!"

At that the boys began to urge their schoolmate to go faster, but Miles did not look back, and shortly he disappeared over the top of the hill in the direction of Mill Street, just as another blast of the horn echoed down the river.

Jug Macdougal began to repeat in a singsong voice:

"Little Boy Blue,
Come blow your horn;
The cows 're in the meadow,
The sheep in the corn!"

All the boys began to laugh, with the exception of Bill Sayne, who turned away to

look across the river where the stony pasture was showing green with the coming of early spring. Somehow, the jeering of the boys and the tooting of the horn made him feel uncomfortable. He had seen the unhappy expression on the face of Miles Breton as the horn attracted their attention. Now he remembered that this was the first time Miles had ever joined the boys on The Rocks. Every one knew how closely Miles was kept at home. The sound of Mr. Breton's shrill whistle was familiar enough, but the horn was something new.

The boys, thinking of Miles, slowly followed him up the stony path, and with quick "tags" and snatches at one another's hats they separated to go home. All of them had a little work to do around their homes — bringing wood, carrying coal, errands, and other things that fall to the lot of boys in a village.

They scattered, some up and some down the street, and others along the railway-track. Bill Sayne walked slowly up to his aunt's house, alone, wondering about Miles.

When he went down-town after the mail after supper he found the usual gathering at the post-office awaiting the opening of the mail-window; he found that not only the

young people, but the grown people as well, were talking about the horn. The murmuring of the voices ceased instantly when Mr. Breton, holding Miles tightly by the hand, came in and opened his lock-box for his mail.

Mr. Breton was a very important man here in Philadelphia, for he owned the machine factory where they made various fine tools. He employed many skilled mechanics, and he was rated in the commercial agencies, and every one knew that he was "rich." He had one child, Miles, and the way he was bringing his son up was much admired by all the unmarried ladies of advanced years, as well as by sundry other well-meaning people who had no children of their own.

As soon as Mr. Breton and Miles went on their way there broke out renewed talk, but Bill Sayne said nothing about his schoolmate. He couldn't bear to, because he liked Miles and he knew that Miles suffered more than any other boy in town; not that Miles ever said anything to Bill about his personal affairs. His bearing showed Bill, as well as his schoolmates, that he suffered.

In the morning Mrs. Breton came walking down to school with Miles, and as soon as she saw him safely in the schoolhouse, just

before the last bell rang, she turned homeward, giving little nods of her head to the boys and girls whom she regarded as nice children. The call of the bell diverted the thoughts of most of the pupils to lessons, but one or two of the boys felt that her presence had deprived them of a chance for a joke which they had saved up overnight.

What they had in mind developed at recess. No sooner were they down in the great school-yard than Bill Sayne heard a chant starting over in one side of the yard:

"Oh, Little Boy Blue,
Come *blow* your horn!"

He started with an angry toss of his head, but stopped short when he realized how little good he could do just then. There were Jug Macdougal and four or five of Jug's friends, with Miles Breton cornered against the fence, singing the little nursery song to him, without realizing the hurt they were inflicting.

Miles was shrinking from the taunting and not able to think what to do. All winter long — in fact, for years — he had endured similar teasing till it seemed as if he was hardened to the torment. Now Bill saw something come into Miles's expression which

gave him hope, for just what he could not tell himself. Bill remembered how he had had his trouble with Jug Macdougal and Jug's friends. He hoped that Miles would somehow see that it was better to take a whipping from the little bullies than it was to suffer such taunts.

Just as he thought Miles meant to do something, however, the unhappy youth suddenly broke away and ran around the schoolhouse and up-stairs to the assembly-room, where he was safe from the gang under the eyes of the principal. The boys pursued him at full speed to the top of the stairs.

They did not have a chance at him that noon, nor yet at recess in the afternoon, for Miles failed in his history lesson and had to stay in. Jug Macdougal saw that he did not escape, however, for he waited at the door after school was let out, and caught Miles as he came down the steps.

"Come, 'Little Boy Blue!'" Jug jeered, while a number of his friends laughed. "Has he been fed on his little bottle of milk yet?"

With sudden and entirely unexpected fury Miles leaped at his tormentor and hit him fairly in the face. He followed the blow with another, and Jug staggered backward down

the steps, Miles hitting him as hard as he could. But Jug was a hard, strong, burly youth who had long been compelled to take care of himself. Besides, he had been boxing with an old set of gloves down at the barn. After the first three or four surprising blows he put up his arms and began to ward them off, and then suddenly drove home a heavy fist on Miles's white and tender face. He followed it with another, and, as the blows told, Miles staggered back helpless, for he had never been hardened to such pain and effort; he was not allowed to play ball because it was rough, nor ride a bicycle because he was sure to fall off, and perhaps hurt himself.

So Jug Macdougal wore him out, fought him till he was breathless, and Miles Breton was whipped. His eyes were blacked and his nose was bleeding.

It was the first time in his life that Miles had found himself dependent entirely upon himself. Half stunned as he was and embittered by defeat—which he knew he had not deserved—he nevertheless felt rising in his heart a novel sensation which was not unpleasant. He realized his humiliation in defeat, but at the same time away down in the depths of his feelings he discovered a

strange anger, which increased more and more while he washed his face at the pump.

Then his mother came. She had started to meet him, as usual, and, not meeting him, she came clear to the school and there found her only son with swelling eyes, a bloody shirt, muddied clothes, and quite the most mussed-up appearance that she had ever seen him have since the day when, as a little baby in an immaculate white dress, he found and upset the coal-scuttle and ate with gusto an unmeasured quantity of delicious grit—delicious after a perfect régime of ideal foods unbroken for two years.

Mrs. Breton wept on her son's shoulder. She hailed the bus which happened to be passing, and had Miles taken home at once. Then she called the doctor and summoned Mr. Breton from his business. Alcohol was rubbed on the bruises, taking out the color, and, to please the anxious parents, the doctor gave Miles some pills to soothe his excited nerves—they were sugar, anise, and starch pills, and could do no harm.

Of course, among boys when a lad has shown himself able and willing to fight—even though he does take a whipping—he is treated with much more respect, especially if he has fought

with the bully of the school, as Miles had done. All would have been well with him, so far as school was concerned, if he had been permitted to go to school the same as usual. But instead of that he was kept in bed three days—and every one knew it.

If life had been difficult before for the boy, it now became unendurable. The boys laughed at him; the girls, if they paid any attention to him at all, teased him in ways that were less obvious but quite as effective —and this, though they were really kind-hearted.

Then it was that William McPeter Sayne, who had been a mere observer, with hardly a speaking acquaintance with Miles, found himself taking the part of the lad who shrank from others and looked over his shoulder as he walked. He stopped Jug from trying to pick another fight one day.

Very quietly Bill began to tell Miles about the Adirondack woods, and the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, and other things that he knew well. He did not realize what he was rousing in the heart of Miles Breton, or he would not have told him how easy it was for "anybody" to camp out and go anywhere he wanted to, if he only had the courage—boy

talk, in a way, and very like the talk of some older adventurers and "globe-trotters."

Miles asked a thousand questions. He seemed to forget his humiliation, and, as Mr. and Mrs. Breton knew William Sayne was a clean, hardy youth, they liked to have him come to see Miles and play checkers at the Breton home. Miles had played so much that he was expert; but he would stop his playing in mid-game to ask about boys who wander away into the world, making their own way.

One morning Bill opened his algebra book and found a note in it. He wondered as he opened to read it. He was astonished by what he read:

DEAR BILL,—I can't stand this babying any more, and I am going away. I sha'n't come back till I can lick the fellow that calls me Sheep, and I wish you was going with me, but you know how it is.

Yours truly,

MILES BRETON.

Bill read the note through twice, and promptly showed it to Professor Lyon. He uttered a low exclamation, saying:

"You'd better hurry and tell his parents—his father first."

Bill left the room, and the first classes were called.

II

A FOOLISH ADVENTURE

MILES had slipped out of his room about midnight, foolishly resolved to run away. He had saved about nine dollars, little by little, intending to buy himself a bicycle some day, but his parents watched his money so close that it had been a slow process. Now he had so much money to start with, and he thought that it was enough to give him a chance to make his way in the world, like newsboys and others whom he had read of.

He went to the railroad-station and caught the two-o'clock train for the West. He thought of going to Montana or Nevada, or some other state whose distance was great, but his money would buy a ticket only as far as Buffalo, where he arrived toward noon, very tired, very hungry, and feeling particularly helpless.

This was the first time he had ever traveled alone, and his idea of a large city had been

based on Watertown at fair-time, when, with his father holding one hand and his mother the other, he had viewed the exhibits of produce, farming implements, and the racing of various kinds. His idea of a crowd was of hundreds of people standing around in groups or walking leisurely around with smiles on their faces. Now he found himself among thousands who hurried, who scarcely paused at all, who did not smile—at least not at him—and where every one but he seemed to have something to do.

Fearfully, he went into a restaurant and for the first time in his life selected his own dinner; because he was free to do as he pleased he ordered pie and cake and charlotte russe. The smiling waiter served coffee, and he drank that.

After he had eaten and paid the cost—forty cents' worth of sweets—he started forth again, wondering if he could not earn some money, for he realized that he must do this as soon as possible. The sharp-eyed, pale-faced boys whom he saw selling newspapers and scuttling along with envelopes in their hands, or even squatting in groups on the sidewalks, were all busy. If they noticed him at all it was with a grin. The attentions of his school-

mates, heartless as they had been, were better than this shutting him out of all the activities of the world, leaving him to shift for himself.

He tramped on till he was tired. His hands were dirty, his neck felt gritty, and an increasing thirst afflicted him. Now that he thought of it, the wish for water increased, and he saw no place where he could drink. He passed fountains where horses and dogs could drink comfortably, but he could see no place where he could quench his thirst.

He tramped on. He wandered out of the business part of town into the quiet residential section, where children played on the sidewalks and grocery-wagons paused in their course from house to house. Hungrily he watched the young people on their way home from school, and he felt how much harder it was to be among strangers than to be cared for at home.

He realized suddenly, with a start, that he did not have enough money to buy a ticket home. He dismissed that thought with the assertion that he wasn't going home; that he was going the other way, if anywhere.

He tramped until he was tired, and then in the evening he sat down on the curb to rest, footsore and weary. By this time the streets

in that part of the city had filled with many men and women going home from work, apparently at peace with the world. If they were tired, at least they had some place to go—a home.

In all his short life Miles Breton had never quite appreciated what it meant to have a home, father, and mother. Home had always been a place of restrictions, where he must do this and must not do that, and where he found shelter from the jeers of unfeeling young people. From home he had been sent forth against his will into the unsympathetic crowd of young people at school, where he had been tormented until he had become desperate. But through it all he had never suffered from thirst as he did now.

He had never earned a penny in his life, and in all the things he had learned at school—arithmetic, grammar, algebra, history, geography, chemistry—there was not one word telling him how to find a job by which he might earn money. There wasn't even a word to tell him how to spend the money that he did have in order to get the best results from it. This Miles now saw dimly, and there came to his heart a bitterness worse than anything he had ever before felt. For all the

hours and days and months and years that he had lived—he was more than fifteen years old—he could not see that he had ever learned one thing that would enable him to earn enough money to keep himself.

There were hundreds of boys in Buffalo who were earning money—boys who had no parents, boys who had parents not one-tenth as attentive to their welfare, apparently, as his parents had been to his. The feeling of helplessness and incompetence which Miles Breton now had was the hardest thing he had ever had to bear in all his life. The temporary sense of defeat following his fight with Jug Macdougal was nothing compared to what he now felt as he staggered to his feet again and stumbled on, the blisters on his feet crippling him. Night came, with its electric lights and its people frolicking along in their automobiles, on motor-cycles and bicycles, and on foot. There were hundreds who sat on their front steps, and Miles thought that they were all watching him, scorning him, when as a matter of fact they scarcely saw him.

By and by the hour of rest came, and the houses darkened, the streets grew more and more deserted. He found streets where there was not a soul in sight—just the glow

of street-lights through the tree-tops and the long lines of wheel-marks on the smooth pavements.

The loneliness was very hard to bear. Miles Breton was a lad of naturally stout heart and good conscience, but his courage began to fade away, and little by little his throat seemed to grow sore. He began to choke, and at last fairly sobbed. It was not merely that he was hungry and thirsty—he came to a sanitary fountain in a park at last, where he quenched his thirst—but he was whipped. He had been whipped before he ever started from home.

He could see it now. He knew, as every youth of his type knows in the end, that he was incompetent, that he lacked the knowledge and training which would give him the independence rightfully his. The eighty-odd Regents' counts which he had won by clean work in school meant honest toil, but not a single subject that he had taken was of avail now. He could have figured the area of any one of the building-lots in all the city of Buffalo, he could have talked comprehensibly to any one of three nationalities, and there were few Latin inscriptions that he could not have translated. He knew all that, but he

despised the years of his effort because there had not been so much as an hour of instruction in practical business or trade life. He was utterly helpless, and he cried with rage as much as with bitterness.

He was stumbling along, sobbing and weeping, when a policeman noticed him.

"Here, young feller, what's eatin' you?" the policeman demanded.

Miles gave one frightened glance through his tears and then turned and started to run. It was a short race. The policeman caught him by the collar and shook him.

"Come now—what you be'n doin'?" the policeman demanded, and within five minutes the not unkindly man had forced the wretched story out of the frightened lad.

"So that's it—you's run away from home?"

The man called the police-station by telephone from one of the green boxes Miles had noticed during his wanderings. A little later he was in a wagon that rocked and swayed as it clattered through the streets. He saw little of the streets he went through, for his head was bowed with shame and grief. At the police-station he was pulled up before an iron fence, and there told his name, his age, where he lived, his father's and mother's

names—all the things that they ask of people brought to police-stations.

Then they took him through chilly stone, not very brightly lighted rooms and corridors, and locked him in a little cell whose odor was unpleasantly germicidal. For a little while he sat on the cot, staring through the barred door, but somehow the being locked in did not greatly affect his spirits.

"It's all being locked up in this world!" he muttered to himself. "If you aren't in school, or at home, or answering a tin horn, you're in jail. I don't care!"

With that thought he rolled over on the cot, and in two minutes was fast asleep. He was now in the most dangerous mood of all, for when one reaches the point where he doesn't care he has lost the great incentive of life.

III

THE PRODIGAL RETURNED

BILL ran to the machine factory, where he found Mr. Breton in his office, hurriedly attending to some business details, apparently greatly perturbed. At sight of Bill he exclaimed:

"Have you seen Miles? I'm afraid—"

Bill handed the note to him without a word. The man seized it and, leaning against the desk, read it and reread it, growing pale and gasping for breath.

"He's run away!" the man cried. "What did he do that for? Why did he do it? I must hurry and tell Jennie—"

He seized his hat and rushed out. Bill followed him to the street, and after a minute's thought turned back to the school, where he was in time to go to the history recitation just after recess.

"How about it?" Professor Lyon asked Bill in an undertone. "Did they know?"

"Yes," Bill nodded. "Not that he was gone away, but that he was missing. He went to tell Mrs. Breton."

By noon it was known all over town that Miles Breton had run away. Mr. Breton had notified the sheriff, who in turn telephoned to neighboring towns, and ordered post-card notices printed to send far and wide, asking police officials to watch out for the lad.

Because Bill had been closer to Miles than any of the other boys, he was questioned by a deputy sheriff and the town constable; but, try as he might, Bill could not recollect anything that Miles had said which would indicate whither he had gone. He had not asked about the Mississippi River especially, nor about New York City, nor about any other place.

It seemed to Bill likely that Miles had just started up suddenly and fled—fled from his unthinking tormentors, fled from his home, fled from Philadelphia. He did not say so, but he knew that most of the trouble was indicated in the one word "babying." Every one seemed to think the same thing, for on all sides the people who talked about the flight of Miles said over and over again:

"Why, the trouble is they held him too

close. You can't hold a fifteen-year-old boy like a two-year-old; if he stands for it he's a sissy, and if he doesn't stand for it he breaks away at last—hard!"

But every one felt sorry for the Bretons. They had done everything they could think of for Miles; they had sheltered and cared for him and wrapped their whole lives up in his happiness and future. Mr. Breton was working himself sick trying to make a fortune so that his son would not have to know the toil and worry and privations of poverty up through which his father had been compelled to make his way. Now Mr. Breton had the fortune practically made. He could sell out and settle down with no more work, and his son could go through his life living on the income that the stocks and bonds and mortgages would bring him.

Now Mr. Breton was shocked by the revelation. It hurt, more than words could describe, to catch this merciless view of his son's mind; it seemed like ingratitude and cruelty on the part of Miles. Mr. Breton hurried to his wife, and found her sick of heart, quite broken down by the calamity which had fallen on the household out of a sky that seemed unusually clear and serene.

She read the note, and the pain of it was greater to her than to her husband. She could not cry, it hurt so much — to realize now that her son had run away from her because she had taken so much care of him!

She saw him as a helpless little boy out in the world where every one would be cruel to him. She could imagine a thousand things that might happen to him. Through fifteen years she had lived in a panic of dread and worry; and now that she did not know where her runaway son was, all that she suffered was made more painful by his heartless willingness to leave her.

She was compelled to go to bed, and the doctor who came could not help her except by giving her something to make her sleep. Of course, Miles Breton could not have thought of anything but his own woes when he fled. He did not for a moment stop to consider that his running away would not only bring its inevitable troubles to him, but to his own people as well.

Hardly thirty hours after he was missed a telegram came from Buffalo to the sheriff at Philadelphia, describing Miles Breton and asking if he was known there.

Mr. Breton took the next train for Buffalo,

and when he arrived the police sergeant took him to where Miles was sitting in his cell, waiting for what might come.

"Miles!" cried Mr. Breton, almost heart-broken.

"Father!" Miles exclaimed, his voice trembling.

With an effort they controlled themselves, and after some formalities had been attended to Mr. Breton took his son, who was grimy with coal-dust, out into the world again. After having a late dinner in a restaurant, they started for home. They arrived the following morning on the nine-o'clock train.

As it was Saturday, there were dozens of his schoolmates waiting to see Miles arrive. The papers had already described his predicament in Buffalo, and the morning paper had given the information that Miles would arrive on that train.

Bill was there with the rest, but with something more than curiosity and desire for a thrill. In fact, he knew what Miles must be going through, and he wanted to say or do something to shield his friend from the trouble he had brought upon himself.

When Miles Breton came down from the cars his face wore an expression that the

curious spectators could not understand. The boy was unkempt, his eyes squinted, his lips were pressed tight, and his expression had grown hard and bitter. He returned with his father, but after the first expression of emotion in the exclamation in the police-station Miles hardly spoke.

Some one started forward to shake the boy's hand, but Miles snatched his hand away and shouldered his way through the crowd that had gathered, utterly refusing to recognize any one, ignoring Bill with the rest. It was as if he did not know any of them, and when he walked up the street by his father's side some one noticed that when his father started to take hold of his hand he jerked loose.

From a shrinking, open-eyed lad Miles Breton had become a sullen youth with cold eyes. Something seemed to have snapped in his heart. Any one could see from his bearing that he would do what he must, and no more.

On Monday, when he came to school, he did not reply to any of the greetings, but went to his seat and sat there staring at nothing. He flung his books open before him and pretended to study with an indifference which showed in his class-work. It was Jug

Macdougal who discovered how genuinely changed Miles was.

Macdougal was aware of a change in the attitude of his schoolmates toward Miles Breton, but he was not bright enough to understand what it meant. He began cautiously to return to his old tactics of teasing Miles.

"Hello, Sheep!" he said to Miles, the Tuesday after Miles returned.

Instantly Miles leaped at the bully, raging with bitter anger. Macdougal was on the first landing of the stairs, and Miles just ahead of him. The force of the onslaught threw Macdougal off his feet, and he fell backward down the stairs, rolling and bumping to the floor in the hall. He staggered to his feet, partly stunned, but Miles came down upon him from above and knocked him down, and then began to jump upon him with both feet. One of the primary teachers started to interfere, but Miles pushed her back so angrily that she was frightened, and not till the principal himself came and pulled the lad back did he stop; then he stopped instantly and, curling his lips, waited quietly while Jug Macdougal staggered to his feet, his last mean streak pummeled out of him, at least so far as Miles Breton was concerned.

When released, Miles went on up-stairs. At the top of the stairs there was a crowd of boys waiting. They started to show their appreciation of what Miles had done so thoroughly, but Miles plowed through the group and did not look at any of them.

That afternoon Mrs. Breton came to the school to meet him, but Miles saw her out of the up-stairs window. He ran to the rear of the room, climbed through an open window, and, scaling the window-lintel, somehow managed to swing clear and drop to the ground. Then he scudded back to the river, over the fence, and around by the sawmill, the railway-station, and home. He was seen, of course, and shortly it was gossiped around town, as such happenings usually are.

It was a strange change that had come over Miles Breton. Mr. Breton spent many sleepless nights studying the problem. He would watch his boy sitting apathetically by a window, refusing to take any special interest in anything. He would do what he was told—bring in stove-wood, go on errands, and even study, but he seemed to have lost interest in everything that he had been accustomed to do. The doctor who was called in had some sensible ideas, which took form later.

William Sayne's uncle and aunt were among those who realized what the trouble was. They talked freely between themselves, and Bill, who was a discreet youth, listened to what they said.

"You see, they've kept that boy too close," Bill's Aunt Claire explained. "It's just as I always did say. They've broken his spirit, mothering and babying him the way they have—and they don't know enough to see what they've done!"

Bill, with his aunt's remarks ringing in his ears, began to wonder if there wasn't something he could do to help Miles.

In a way he saw that he was partly responsible for Miles Breton; all his schoolmates were responsible for him, but he more than the rest, because he realized his responsibility.

"What can I do?" he asked himself. And suddenly he thought of his desire to explore the wonderful inland seas known as the Great Lakes. He thought of the outdoor life with boat and rod and rifle, and he realized how much a share in this would mean to Miles Breton. He talked the plan over with his parents. They talked with the parents of Miles, who were at first almost aghast. But the doctor said, "Just the thing!" Their

deep love for their boy made them ready to take advice, and at last they consented.

Presently Miles found the wonderful prospect clear before him—a summer of exploration, following the old trails of Indians and French adventurers and the highways of the vast modern commerce of the Great Lakes.

IV

A NEW LIFE OUT OF DOORS

MAKING the preparations for the lake trip proved the most interesting work Miles had ever done. It was an adventure in mathematics, in weather prophecy, in economics, in arithmetic, in strength and utility of materials—how strong should a rope used to moor a rowboat be, how large, and of what material?—in natural history, for it was a question as to what fish and mammals and birds they would have to outfit and arm for. Bill Sayne made outfitting for the journey a study and a joy, and during the weeks that ensued before school closed for the summer he and Miles wrote and rewrote lists of clothes and articles needed.

When at last school ended and the summer began they had their outfits in two meal-sacks and two large pack-baskets. Miles's Uncle George over at Black River had a boat sixteen feet long, forty-two inches wide, and

sixteen inches deep, which had been built for lake-fishing. The boys could take it if they wanted to. Dr. Hurley, the chemist, told them how to waterproof a muslin cloth by boiling it in water and soap—two cakes to the gallon—and then dipping the cloth in a pail of water in which a pound of powdered alum had been dissolved. The alum made the soap lodged in the cloth insoluble. This made a very light tent, wind and water tight. They had a water-pail, three or four two-quart lard-pails, two eight-inch frying-pans, two double all-wool blankets, a six-by-six-foot ground-cloth—painted eight-ounce canvas—a fishing-rod, reel, line, and various kinds of hooks, Bill's .32-caliber rifle, Miles's electric flash-light, extra clothes, and, to start with, about fifty pounds of food, mostly dry soup material, bacon, flour, salt, a ten-pound tin of pilot-bread, or hardtack, etc.

Two days after they graduated Uncle George came over from Black River in his automobile and took back with him the boys, their outfit, and Gyp, Bill's dog. Bill would rather have gone without his tent than without Gyp. Gyp sat on the front seat with Uncle George and squinted into the wind, but looked back occasionally to make certain that

THEY LOADED THE BOAT INTO MR. SIMSER'S WAGON

Bill had not tumbled over backward onto the state good road. Gyp anxiously superintended the unloading of the outfit, in Uncle George's workshop and garage at Black River, and jumped up on the skiff which was resting there on a pair of wooden horses in all the splendor of fresh paint and varnish.

Miles could hardly believe that he was really on his way up the Great Lakes, with a camping trip of months ahead of him. He was eager and watchful, but very quiet. He had quite lost his sullenness, as if overnight the aspect of the world had changed for him, as indeed it had.

The following morning was one of June's very prettiest, bright and clear and sunny. Mr. Simser, who lived down the street a little way, appeared before six o'clock with his one-horse wagon, and they loaded the boat into it, with all the duffle. Then Gyp teetered up and down ahead of the horse, while the boys bade Uncle George and Aunt Phrane good-by.

"The idea of you boys going away like this!" Auntie Phrane exclaimed, with emphasis; and Uncle George patted the boys on the back, remarking, "You're all right—it's next worst to soldiering!"

Uncle George had gone away to the Civil War when a youth, and he knew what boys could do and what boys needed most. They drove down under the great maples and turned toward the river on their way to the state road up toward the railroad-station. As they turned into the road there was a low humming, a motor-cycle flashed into sight, and whirred past so fast that Gyp rose up on his hind-legs and uttered a whine of surprise.

"That's one of the state good road inspectors," Mr. Simser remarked. "He lives here, and he works at Lowville; he goes thirty miles to work in the morning and comes back thirty miles at night—sixty miles every day, even if it rains some. What do you think of that?"

Before either boy could answer another motor-cycle flashed past them, headed toward Watertown.

"That's a lad named Chamberlain," Mr. Simser said. "He lives at Felts Mills, and is serving an apprenticeship in the machinist trade at Watertown; he rides twenty-eight miles a day, and his brother Ernest is game-protector. Ernest rides that machine to Carthage for a shave before breakfast, they say, and he rides up and down the Black River

valley all times of the day and night, except when the boy is up to Watertown on it. Here comes—that's a man from Great Bend, an agent. He goes after business on that machine. They've made a lot of difference in our roads; it began with the bicycles, and then came the automobiles, and now it's all kinds of things. You're liable to meet a train of cars on these roads some day. But, you know, I kind er like a horse. I work in a planing-mill—lots of machinery around—and the humming and roaring gets in my ears. Now you take Salbert, here, and she's company. I've heard fellows talking to their motor-cycles and automobiles and all that, but not like you'd talk to a horse. A horse is company. No, sir! If I had an automobile, or six of them, I'd have a horse just the same, for company's sake."

All along the road to Watertown the horse shacked along at a comfortable trot over the hard, blue surface—a beautiful road through a land of farms and settlements, already beginning to "perk up," trying to live up to and look like the broad highway which had cut through the fields and along the dark, menacing Black River.

Few rivers have quite the same reputation

that Black River has. The fame is for water-power and for log-driving in the old days. Tens of millions of feet of timber, mostly spruce, hemlock, and pine, were driven down this stream in the old days, and much is still cut and driven from the Adirondacks down to the sawmill and pulp towns. The loggers were wonderful white water-men, who rode the logs down the rifts and still waters—not without tragedies nearly every year, when men were caught in the leaping timber and carried down. Many a logger went to the rescue of another in the bad water, only to lose his own life.

The boys drove through the north side of Watertown, turned out into the Dexter road, and before ten o'clock Mr. Simser stopped his horse beside the low dock on Black River, just below the Dexter dam, and only a mile from the head of Black River Bay, an arm of Lake Ontario.

The two boys and Mr. Simser slid the boat out of the wagon-box onto the dock, and then slipped it over the foot-log into the water. The boat had never been in the water before, but it rode like an egg-shell. The boat liveryman, however, had a criticism to make. He said the seats were in wrong. If they had the

rowing-seats so far forward, the boat would tip down by the head and pull harder. However, if they piled the luggage well back in the stern, and put in a good big rock or two, the boat would do.

The boys listened to the criticism in silence, and when they had loaded the boat they walked up-town to a restaurant and ate an early dinner. Then, having paid Mr. Simser the two dollars due for freighting the boat, and bought groceries, including canned soups, crackers, meat, and a good bone for Gyp, they went down to the dock, boarded their boat, set Gyp safely on the stern-seat, and pushed off.

They were both a little excited, and when they started to row Miles's oars struck Bill's, and they caught crabs and pulled the boat in a half-circle.

"Don't row," Bill said. "Let me get started—let your oars trail. That's right. Take 'em in."

Then Bill leaned to the spruce blades and began to pull a long stroke. The boat swung around, and the four or five spectators who had been smiling broadly at their confusion still smiled, but they nodded with approval. Bill's swing and stroke were unmistakable.

"You've been there before!" one of them called to him.

"Of course," Bill answered. "Wait 'll we get the stroke, and you'll see one boat move on this little creek!"

"Creek!" the man snorted back, adding, "What you need is a gasolene-engine!"

"Not for exercise!" Bill retorted.

In a minute more they were too far away for repartee, and the two settled down to their work. Miles picked up a paddle and, displacing Gyp on the rear seat, caught the stroke as Bill left it, and so they passed the little island a few hundred yards from the dock, out of sight.

It was a little boating community along those banks. There were many small cottages, and at each cottage was at least one boat-house, and in some places there were two. There were a number of little gasolene-boats along the banks, too, and one of these followed them down-stream, overtaking them within half a mile and passing scornfully by. The motor-boat people looked at them curiously, and for a minute or two Bill and Miles felt a slight humiliation. It was as if the motor-boat looked down on them.

"A little engine *would* make this go well!"

Miles suggested, for he felt the humbleness of rowing more keenly than the independent Bill.

"Yes," Bill said, "but by the time this boat of ours comes home we'll know what no motor-boatman could know—the feel of the water. Lots of people have motor-boats, but they haven't what we're going to get—an idea of the Great Lakes. Motor-boats go too fast to see everything. Rowing and walking—rail-road-trains and motor-boats. That's the comparison we can make. If we were in a hurry we'd take the cars!"

"That's right," Miles said. "I hadn't thought of that."

The riverside camps spread out farther apart rapidly, and almost before Bill knew it they were clear of the little summer resort, which had given him a queer feeling of oppression, for summer resorts had little attraction for him.

He turned his head to look, and discovered what Miles had not seen.

"Why, look!" Bill exclaimed. "The lake!"

Sure enough, the river widened into a bay, and beyond the bay, miles distant, they saw Lake Ontario.

"That's so!" Miles cried. "How large it is! What a beautiful green!"

"This is Black River Bay," Bill explained, as his eyes followed the shore-line. "I guess there's lots of muskrats in those marshes there— There's a blue heron!"

Miles looked and saw a bird, with a wing-spread of at least six feet, rising clumsily from the green cattails ahead of them, close to the shore. The bird, heading north, soon passed out of sight; and the two, resting on oars and paddle, took in the scene around them, getting their bearings—literally catching their breath.

Till that minute they had not quite realized the magnitude of their undertaking. Now they saw themselves afloat on the arm of the great fresh-water sea which neither of them had ever seen before. Miles was reminded of the ocean, while Bill, who had not seen the ocean, could think of nothing in comparison except the Mississippi during an overflow.

Their skiff rose and fell on long waves that poured up the bay and washed with gentle swishing among the near-by cattails. There was a wind, now that they were out in the open, coming from the northwest, or perhaps from the west-northwest. Bill saw that they were drifting before this breeze, so he took to the oars again, pulling toward the reeds,

and rowing along them just far enough out to keep the oars clear. It was not quite so lonesome there, close to the friendly reeds.

Bill felt like the explorer of a new country. Miles had not sensed the mighty breadths ahead of them, for he was not experienced. They rounded a little point, and there sat a muskrat, with a white root in its fore-paws, paralyzed by the sudden apparition of a row-boat with a dog and two humans in it. The muskrat sat there, stiff and glaring with fear and surprise, while the boat shot by. The boat had gone some rods when the boys heard a sharp splash behind them.

"There—he's recovered his wits!" Bill laughed. "A young one, hardly more than a kit!"

The incident, small as it was, overcame the awe which Bill had felt—stopped the sinking of his heart, changed the trend of his thoughts, and, so to speak, gave him his second wind.

"What are those things good for?" Miles asked.

"Muskrats? Trappers make a lot of money getting muskrat furs. Some catch as many as thirty or forty in a night. They're worth all the way from five or ten cents for kits to

sixty cents for spring rats and as much as a dollar for black ones—"

"Why, let's get some! We need the money."

"They're no good in summer," Bill explained. "The fur is too thin. If it was fall or winter we'd trap here awhile, though. The only fur that's good for anything this time of year is bears. Bears are prime till away late in the spring, but by this time, or by July 1st, even they're thin and shedding."

"I thought we might earn some money getting them," Miles remarked, regretfully.

"Well, perhaps next fall, but not now. We've got to do something different now; there's plenty to do along here when we get to looking for work. We must get our bearings on the lake first."

Suddenly the marsh on their right petered out. They looked back and saw that the cattails grew in a narrow strip, and that behind them, as well as on all sides of them, there was the open water. The water around them was black, like the swamp-water of the West Canada, coming out of the Adirondacks, but ahead of them the lake was light, bright green. Miles wondered why, and Bill explained:

"It's because Black River fills up the bay with black water, but outside, there, it's the color of the water out of most of the rivers. That water in the lake looks like the Ohio River."

Bill pulled toward the north side of the bay, to keep near the shore. The gentle rising and falling of the skiff was exhilarating to him. He began to hum a low song as his eyes turned to sweep the horizon, to scan the banks, and to gaze across the wide waters.

Suddenly the boat shook, and Miles sagged on the stern-seat where he .was sitting, groaning.

"What's the matter?" Bill exclaimed, startled by his friend's pale face.

"I—I don't know—something I ate—I—"

"I guess we'd better go ashore!" Bill said, sharply, with a keen sense of responsibility.

V

WORK FINDS THE TRAVELERS

BILL remembered how his first day in a shanty-boat on the Allegheny River had made him ill, and he knew just how Miles felt.

"We'll go ashore," he told Miles. "Sailors are seasick sometimes," he added, lest Miles should feel ashamed.

They landed near a clump of willow-trees, where the beach was of gravel and thin disks of slate. Gyp jumped ashore joyfully, with his ears and tail waving. Bill steadied the boat and Miles stumbled to land. He sat down in the shade of the willow-trees, while Bill hauled the boat up and carried the duffle to a level place.

"We won't try to go any farther to-day," he told Miles. "You see, you'll feel bad for just a little while, and then perhaps it won't trouble you again on this trip. Perhaps you'll be all right to-morrow. I was pretty bad at first, but in two or three days I was all right again."

Then Bill made Miles some strong lemonade without much sugar, and before long Miles sat up and looked around.

"There's the flag!" Miles suddenly exclaimed. "Look at it!"

Sure enough, miles away, they could see a flickering above the green landscape across the bay.

"What place is that?"

"Sackett's Harbor. That's what it is!" Miles exclaimed. "Why, that's where my great-grandfather fought in the War of 1812. You know, the Americans made a naval station of it. Sir George Prevost attacked it in May, 1813, and I've read in great-grandfather's diary how the British came roaring up to the fort and the Americans had to run. But they came back while the British were scattered around looking for loot. The British ran away faster than they came, but they had burned some boats and all the stores before they went. Grandpa was just a little boy, fourteen or fifteen years old, but he ran away from his home, way down in the Mohawk Valley somewhere. He came to Sackett's Harbor through the woods with an ammunition wagon-train, and they enlisted him there. He went to the Mexican War, and he wanted

to go to the Civil War, but they wouldn't take him because he was too old then, so they made him Colonel of the Home Guard, or something like that. We've his sword at home now."

Miles sprang up and went down by the water's edge, staring at the old fort and its dark-red barracks.

"I thought you were seasick!" Bill suggested, slyly.

"That's so, I was!" Miles exclaimed in some confusion. "But when I saw the flag I forgot all about it."

Bill laughed appreciatively. "We'd better camp here," he said, "and in the morning we'll row on down the bay a ways."

"Let's go a little farther!" Miles suggested, eagerly. "I want to get a little closer so we can see the fort plainer."

They rowed along the shore nearly two miles, till they were able to see the panorama of the fort and the woods and fields on either side of the barracks. They hauled the boat up onto the beach, and unloaded the camp outfit, carrying it up to a natural terrace above the wave-line. There they swung their tent and carried up driftwood for fire.

Gyp went hunting, and in a few minutes

they heard him yelping and barking for help. Bill went over to see what was the matter, and found that Gyp had cornered a young woodchuck under a rock. Bill killed it, and when he carried it back to camp he announced a pot-pie as soon as Miles should feel hungry enough to eat it.

"Young woodchucks are as good as rabbits," Bill said.

When night came they built a fire on the beach and sat down beside it. It was a dark night, only a few stars showing in the hazy sky. The shore lights of various kinds around the bay seemed only to add to the gloom. There was no wind, but little waves rippled up on the beach. Gyp was uneasy, trotting up and down the beach and growling at the wavelets. He seemed to feel in them a mystery which filled him with doubt as they leaped and rustled out of the dark.

The boys, too, felt the mystery of the bay. It was so very quiet, so very dark and shadowy. If they spoke it was in low whispers, as if they disliked to make a noise in the gloom. They said nothing for what seemed a long time, when suddenly there appeared a red glow, as if out on the water. It appeared as if some huge one-eyed monster

of the deep had reared itself up out of the water. As the boys watched, the glow turned from red to white, and then came a blinding flash like a blow in their faces. They ducked their heads, and Gyp sprang up with an angry growl. The thing retreated along the shore, and then disappeared as suddenly as it had come.

As the object receded three large waves rolled up on the gravel, followed by several small ones, and then another large one. The boys rubbed their eyes.

"It must have been a boat," Bill said. "The waves came in like the swell from a boat. I didn't see anything till I saw that red spark."

"Nor I," Miles exclaimed. "It hurt my eyes."

"Mine, too!"

Again the bay was still. Several of the lights went out, and even a whippoorwill which had been calling mournfully became silent or flew away. At last the boys spread their blankets and turned in to sleep, with Gyp curled up on a piece of carpet-bagging.

In the morning a drizzling rain made everything gray and chilly. The clouds hung low and the day was dark. The boys could

hardly feel cheerful on such a morning, but Bill jumped up and ran down to the water, where he plunged in for a swim. After a little hesitation Miles followed him, and when they had rubbed themselves down with coarse towels and dressed they felt a hundred per cent. better.

"Nothing like a little swim on a fresh morning to start the blood circulating," Bill declared.

They built a fire, and instead of waiting for dinner they fried the woodchuck for breakfast. Bill made some flapjacks, and Miles took a pail and went back to a farm, where he bought two quarts of milk.

Miles ate as heartily as Bill, and would have forgotten his seasickness of the day before had not Bill cautioned him.

"Shall we put on our raincoats and go on a few miles?" Bill asked, and Miles thought it would be a good idea.

"We can stop and camp anywhere," he suggested.

They packed up their outfit and covered it with water-proofed muslin in the boat, and then took down the tent and spread that over the outfit. Miles sat in the stern, Gyp got in the bow, and Bill rowed.

The waves were hardly noticeable, but the water was wrinkled over with the falling of the little raindrops. They could not see Sackett's Harbor on the opposite side of the bay, and they kept close to the shore, which, even at a few rods' distance, loomed gray and misty.

They passed a small dock where a sail-boat was moored, and where there were boat-houses in a tiny bay, sheltered from the wind and waves. As they passed the dock they saw a man sitting on a chair, with an umbrella over his head and a fishing-rod out over the water, as comfortable as could be.

"Cruising, boys?" he asked.

"Yes. Any luck?"

"Not much," the man answered. "Some perch."

A moment later they were again coasting the lonesome shore. They rowed along for an hour, when from astern came a motor-boat. It was as gray as the mist, and as silent. At the wheel sat, or, rather, crouched, a man. His beard was red and his eyes, under a sou'wester storm-hat, fairly glistened with sharp light. Beside him sat a figure larger but less noticeable.

When opposite the boys the motor-boat suddenly came to a reverse-gear stop.

"Is your name Will Sayne?" the red-bearded man asked.

"Yes, sir," Bill answered, astonished.

"I saw by the papers you were starting out on a trip up the Lakes, and that you intended to work your way—you and Giles something-or-other—"

"Miles Breton," Bill refreshed his memory.

"That's so—beg pardon. Well, if you want a job, here's one, and it 'll pay you well."

"We'd be glad of a chance to earn money," Bill said, eagerly.

"All right—two dollars a day each, and expenses. Wait here till we come back. By the way, do you know anything about motor-boats?"

"I know motors—my uncle has a motor-car."

"All right, Bill; you haven't much to learn then."

The man threw the reverse again and the boat gathered headway, swung around, and headed out into the mouth of the river.

"Why—do jobs come like that to any one?" Miles exclaimed.

"Yes-s," Bill answered, doubtfully, "some kinds of jobs—sometimes; probably it's all right, though. If this was down Old Missis-

sip' I'd think that man was a pirate—but there aren't any pirates on Lake Ontario. Anyhow, we'll wait, and if we don't like the job, we'll quit it."

"He said two dollars a day! Won't that be fine—right off, the first thing!"

Instead of pulling out, as they had intended to do, they spread the ground-cloth in the shade of one of the great willow-trees, and, lying down in comfort, they waited. The birds were chirruping, busy with their nesting duties. Gyp went up on a near-by farm to hunt woodchucks. Soon the boys dozed and fell asleep.

When they wakened it was late in the afternoon. The sun was hardly an hour from setting. They were hungry, and Gyp was proudly awaiting commendation as he posed over a furry rag which he had caught and brought down to the camp.

"Why, he's killed something!" Miles cried.

"A woodchuck!" Bill laughed, patting Gyp on the head. "The farmer ought to give you a reward for that, Gyp."

The two went to work to set up their tent and get supper. Bill remarked:

"He may not have really meant it—just fooling us because he saw what the Philadelphia reporter wrote about our trip."

"I hope not!" Miles cried, eagerly. "I should be disappointed if he didn't show up."

"Well, I shouldn't much—not so much for him as for some others. Of course I want work—only his face; I never saw a mustache like that!"

They were just through eating and had gathered a pile of driftwood for the fire when the motor-boat appeared again, with only the red-mustached man in it.

"I want to talk to you awhile," the man said. "My boat draws twenty-six inches. Come off in your skiff. That's a fine place for you to camp—just right for me."

As the two came alongside, the man looked into the skiff sharply, with rather more than a sailor's appreciation of its good shape and sea qualities.

"Anchor her out," the man said, "and I'll give you a little lesson in motor-boating. Know anything about the stars? North Star?"

"Oh yes," Bill answered. "I'm a woodsman—"

"A woodsman? Good! Then you know about going by compass and charts—I mean maps?"

"Quite a lot—"

"Well, what I want you to do won't be

very hard then. You see, you may have to do some night and fog running in this boat for me. I'm a very busy man, and I want you to learn how to take this boat anywhere in any weather. I've got a kind of parcels express up and down the Lakes, from place to place and around, and I need help. Of course, it's such a good business I don't want everybody to know about it or how much I do. You know competition ruins business. No matter what happens, don't go to yelling and bleating around. Keep your mouths shut!"

Bill threw over the ninety-cent anchor for the skiff, and telling Gyp to watch the camp, they left the gravel beach while the man stood Bill at the wheel, which was exactly like an automobile's. Bill could run it without coaching, speeding up and slowing down. But the reverse gear was a different matter, and he had to be told about that. The engine, too, was different from his Uncle George's, which he had learned to run.

Miles Breton had been at his father's shop often enough to have some little knowledge of machinery, and as he listened and watched there in the motor-boat, and recalled the things he had learned while riding in automobiles, he rapidly picked up the points the

strange little man snapped at them about the motor-boat.

"Now it's your turn!" the man told Miles, and so in the twilight, out near the shore of the dark lake, Miles took the wheel and turned due north, due west, due south, steering by the North Star.

The man made a motion in the dark and the engine began to pop and sputter.

"Now what would you do?" the man demanded. "What would you kids do if it began to do that?"

Bill did not answer, but threw the switch, stopping the engine.

"Bring your flash, Miles!" he said, and the man chuckled with an odd good humor as the two boys, by light of the little electric flash that Miles carried, looked over the engine. Miles discovered the wire dangling from one of the spark plugs, and he hooked it up, while Bill held the flash. Then Bill threw the switch, turned the fly-wheel over, and, with a snort, the engine headed away again, while Bill threw the reverse gear on center, to give Miles time to take the wheel.

"Four minutes!" the man chortled, and, moving around the engine, for two or three hours he cut off the gasolene, loosed wires and

other parts that must be looked after in order to keep a motor engine running. As it was in the night, miles from shore, the man was giving them a very practical experience. His final lesson for the night was:

"Now go and pick up your skiff, and go ashore!"

Both boys gasped at that. They had been so busy learning about the inside of the boat and twisting around to go north and south and east and west that they had quite lost track of where they were.

"Why, I don't know where we are!" Miles exclaimed.

"Neither do I," the man snapped at them, climbing aft and rolling up in a tarpaulin in the pit aft of the engine, "and if you kids don't moor at that skiff before daybreak you lose your jobs—and ashore you go wherever we do land, I'll tell you that!"

With that, he drew his tarpaulin over his partly bald little head and went chortling and chuckling to sleep, leaving two perfectly amazed youths staring across the star-reflecting waters at yellow lights and dark vistas of gloom.

VI

ODD TASKS

AFTER his first minute of confusion and surprise Bill Sayne looked at the North Star, and realized that to the east of them was the end of Lake Ontario. He could not tell where to the eastward Black River Bay was, but he knew that waiting there would not take them to the anchorage of their skiff. He threw over the reverse and started the boat ahead, and sitting down at the wheel turned the boat around and headed due east by the North Star. He could see a lighthouse flashing close to the water's surface somewhere near north from him, and almost east of him was another. He headed toward the latter, his eyes looking back and forth, as he wondered whether the bay was north or east or south.

In a little more than half an hour the lighthouse ahead of them flashed so brightly that they knew they were close upon it, and during

the dark interval they could see land dead ahead. Bill turned to the southward and cruised along with the land lying dark and gloomy along their left hand—to the east, the North Star said.

Here the boat rolled, and from inshore came the low, swashing roar that a dead sea makes when it falls splashing upon the beach. Fearful of getting into too shoal water, Bill pulled out a bit, and in another half-hour he saw land dead ahead in the west.

He steered more and more to the right, and suddenly he knew by the North Star that he was again cruising toward the east. The lighthouse light flashed then, almost straight ahead of him, and continuing east he heard Miles suddenly whisper,

"Land ahead—look out!"

Sure enough, there was land, and the boat was rolling and rocking again in shoal water. Bill hauled off to the northward, his eyes straining in the night.

"What's that glow over there?" he asked.

"Looks like a town; say, Bill, that must be Dexter!"

"That's right; we'll go up past that lighthouse, anyhow."

Bill held to pass to the north of the light-

house, and, with the island perhaps a quarter of a mile to the right, Bill headed straight toward the glowing sky that indicated a town beneath. A mile farther and a voice came echoing across the water:

"Post No. 1, and all's well!"

"Post No. 2, and all's well!" another voice cried.

"What's that?" Miles demanded.

"It's some fort— Why—of course! That's Sackett's Harbor! This is Black River Bay. Let's see!"

Bill looked around and gradually found his bearings again. He turned to the northeast, diagonally across the water, which here rested between two shores in a narrow way. He ran at slow speed, watching intently. He detected a little clump of farm dwellings on the shore to the north, and then he spied a line of tree-tops against the sky.

"Willows!" he whispered, and they began to search the water's surface in the reflections of the trees along the shore. Bill whistled softly, and from a hundred yards ahead came the eager whine of a dog.

"Gyp!" Miles uttered, with joyful accent.

"Stand by the reverse!" Bill whispered, throttling down the motor.

A dark craft upon the water loomed ahead, and a moment later the motor-boat drifted alongside and came to a stop.

"Now what?" Miles whispered.

"Why, we might as well wake him up. No—um-m. I don't know what we had better do. Well, drop the anchor overboard, and we'll go ashore. We'd better cover the engine up, though, so it won't be wet with dew. Here's a box! Say, isn't that flash the handiest thing you ever saw. Let's see if he's all right."

Bill cautiously took the light and turned the beam into the pit aft. He straightened up and looked again, and then he cried out in amazement:

"Why, he's gone!"

"What!"

"Look! See that! The canvas is all folded up. Where on earth. He's tumbled overboard. Listen!"

Bill opened his mouth to yell, but Miles seized him by the arm.

"Don't!" he said. "You remember what he said about not yelling, no matter what happened?"

"That's so. Well, we have a mighty fine motor-boat, anyhow, if he doesn't come back and we don't find him. Listen!"

Gyp had begun to whine and bark in a low, almost growling tone. Up the beach they heard footsteps, and after a while a low whistling sounded in melodious tune.

"Some one is coming!" Miles exclaimed. "We'd better go ashore and look after our things!"

Having anchored the motor-boat, they had only to climb over into their skiff, pull up the anchor, and Bill drove the little boat ashore with the paddle.

As they reached the shore and the keel ran noisily up the gravel slope, the beach-walker came to them, and Miles flashed the light in his face.

"Goodness! How did you get here?" he demanded, for it was their employer, smiling as he blinked in the light, and swinging a black bag in his hand.

"Oh, I grew tired of riding, so I thought I would walk awhile," he answered; "but please remember that you are not to ask any questions. I don't want to be bothered that way. Now here is your pay for the day's work; you did very well. Now if you'll set me out on the launch I'll bid you good night!"

He stepped into the skiff, and Bill paddled him out to the launch, which he hopped into

like a huge frog. He hoisted the anchor, and as Bill came away he heard the man laughing softly to himself—a cold, harsh kind of a cackle which seemed funny, and yet, somehow, made Bill's back crinkle.

Miles was waiting for him on the beach, and drew the rowboat up as it came ashore. Bill threw the anchor out on the gravel, well up and safe from waves or tide. Then they went to the tent and lighted the lantern.

They ate hungrily of oranges and bread-and-butter, while they talked about their strange employer who knew so much about them, and about whom they knew so little.

"He must have jumped overboard and swam to shore," Miles exclaimed.

"When he climbed into the boat I felt of his clothes, and they were dry—didn't even have as much dew on them as we have on ours!" Bill objected. "Look at him go!"

The launch was turning out into the bay and driving away noiselessly in the dark. They had never imagined a boat could go so fast with so little noise. It was soon lost to sight, vanishing in the flickering murk.

"You can hardly see it, anyhow!" Miles muttered.

"I wonder if that isn't why he had it painted that color?" Bill asked, half to himself.

"That's what I was wondering—probably he is just one of those millionaires who are always doing odd things," Miles suggested.

"Nobody but that kind would pay at the end of the first day," Bill said. "Why, look at that! It's a five-dollar bill he gave me!"

"Me too. What do you suppose—"

"Well, I think he was pretty glad we found our way in here. He was just trying us, and we pleased him. That talk about his running an express service may be just a blind. This is just his notion of having fun, perhaps. No business man 'tending to business would be apt to do that way."

"That's so."

When they had eaten, they spread down their blankets and lay down, but before going to sleep their minds reverted to the conundrum: "How could a man swim half a mile to shore and not get his clothes wet?"

"Well, how did he do it?" Miles demanded, sitting up to argue the matter.

"I don't know; he certainly wasn't wet. He couldn't have jumped up to a bridge, because we didn't pass under a bridge. How do you suppose he did it?"

When they had talked and argued for an hour, without coming to any conclusion, they fell asleep. It was past three o'clock in the morning by this time, and they were exhausted with the wear of the long day.

It was nearly nine o'clock when they awoke. The day was as beautiful and calm as the previous one. The sun was warm and the water drew them in for a swim before breakfast. Gyp was awake and going around on tiptoes, peering into the tent to see if the boys were ready to turn out, and he greeted them at last with joyous barks. Gyp did not know any more what to make of the night's doings than the boys did. He had growled when the man came down the beach, a fact that Bill took into consideration in his estimate of the man, now that he had slept on the day's events.

It was afternoon when their employer came across lots to them. He now had on an automobile duster, and goggles across his forehead.

"Good day, boys!" he remarked. "By the way, my name is Captain Jogues, and I thought I would give you a little ride to-day in my automobile. Better pack up your things and take down your tent, however, as you'll want to move shortly!"

In a few minutes, with all their things stowed in the skiff, they crossed the fields with Gyp at their heels, to the road, where stood a fine six-cylinder car.

"Jump in, boys—and dog, too! Why, purp, you couldn't keep up with this machine if it went at a walk!"

Gyp sat on the rear seat with Bill, while Miles sat beside Captain Jogues, who gave him lessons in running the car. This day Bill kept his eyes on the sun and on the lie of the land. He didn't want to be caught away out in the country, with instructions to go somewhere from some place he didn't know the name of, but the man merely rode them around all the afternoon, up and down the roads.

Captain Jogues seemed to be looking the country over himself, glancing around with an odd, quick, sidelong glance, wearing the goggles all the while, and humping up his shoulders at intervals. When they met teams or other automobiles, he watched them sharply.

It was fine riding around, sometimes near the lake shore, sometimes catching a glimpse of the water from a hill-crest miles distant, and then again following some stream's valley

for half an hour or so, Miles all the while having the wheel and running as the man told him, fast, slow, to right or left at road forks, while Bill leaned forward to learn, too.

They ran into Watertown at just six o'clock, and stopped at a restaurant.

"Time for something to eat!" the man chuckled, while Miles rubbed his forearms and took hold of his elbows. The hours of effort had suddenly revealed how weak his arms were, and they were tired—very tired.

Captain Jogues took the two to a little private stall, where he removed his goggles and coat. The waiter took their order, and when they had eaten their employer put on his goggles, coat, and hat, and took them away again, this time holding the wheel himself.

He drove the car straight out into the country, through cross-roads and over state roads. They went north for a time, and then swung gradually around to the west. Just at dusk they came to a woods road through which the man took them to the side of a little bay.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed, jumping up and looking around. "Yes, this is the place. Here's your day's wages! Jump out, now—good-by!"

With a puff and a snort he swung the car

around and darted away in the falling dusk, leaving the two boys standing amazed and disconcerted—they could not tell how far from Black River Bay, where they had left their skiff.

"Isn't he the greatest!" Bill exclaimed.

"Why—where are we going to stay to-night?" Miles demanded, looking around doubtfully.

"I don't know. What's that thing over there?" Bill answered, leaning to look at the woods a few rods beyond Miles.

VII

A LAKES' EXPRESS

"IT looks like a tent," Bill remarked, when they walked toward the thing in the edge of the woods' brush which had attracted his attention, adding later: "Why, it is a tent—and there's a skiff— Why—why—"

Quite speechless, they approached the place and found that Bill's hesitation was well grounded. It was their tent, their skiff, their outfit—everything all ready for the night. Even the blankets were spread, half folded up, and there was a neat pile of driftwood beside a little stone fireplace.

"It makes me feel queer!" Miles ejaculated when he had taken in the outfit, down to its details.

"Here 're the tracks," Bill remarked, pointing to the sand, "and there is where a little boat landed. There was only one man did it, though. Same size shoes, and there's a patch where the bottom of the shoe was worn

through—hole in the sole. Captain Jogues just sent the fellow around here with the motor-boat. I don't know what to make of it. Did you notice, Gyp didn't shine up to him very much?"

"I didn't notice much; dogs do that way to most strangers—"

"Gyp doesn't—not so much!"

They had more to talk about that night, and they could come no nearer the idea than they had before. Miles was pretty tired, after the hours at the wheel, but he was proud to have been able to stick to the lesson, long though it was, and although his arms ached with the effort.

"I'd have fainted before I'd given up!" Miles declared. "He's just trying us, to see if we have good grit. When he is ready he'll have something for us to do. Wonder what it 'll be?"

"That is what is bothering me," Bill remarked, slowly.

"Pshaw!" Miles exclaimed, "what's the use of worrying about it? If it isn't all right, why, we needn't do it; he's just some rich fellow who likes to have fun this way, puzzling us. If it's worth four dollars a day to him, why, it's worth that much to us."

"That's right—but somehow one grows pretty suspicious after he has traveled around some. I can't just figure out what he is driving at. Hello! The wind is coming up; hear it in the trees? If we were out on that willow beach we would catch it full out of the west. But we're sheltered here!"

By the light of their fire they talked awhile, and then they turned in to sleep. Miles had soon begun to accept things as a matter of course, and, being tired, he was soon sound asleep, but not so with Bill. He could not accept things at their surface value or appearance.

It wasn't anything that Bill could make up his mind about, but away down in his heart there lurked the uneasiness which, as he told Miles, made him suspicious without knowing why.

Comforting himself with the reflection that he could quit the job any time he wished, he was just falling into a deep sleep when some one touched him on the shoulder.

"'Sh-h!" the visitor whispered. "Miles is pretty tired after running around all day; come on, and don't wake him up!"

It was Captain Jogues, who pointed a pocket flashlight at his own face, so Bill would recognize him.

Cautiously Bill crawled out of the bed, and in five minutes, with his sweater on, he was down by the water's edge. The man led the way into the skiff, and Bill pushed off. Then the man poled off with the paddle, and turned the boat to head out around the point just beyond the camp. There Bill saw the launch looming against the dark waters.

"Drop the skiff anchor over!" the captain ordered, as the skiff ran alongside. In a minute, with the captain at the wheel, the launch drove out into the gloom across wider waters, where it began to nod and rock to the rise of the waves.

"Better put on the oilskins you'll find in the locker beside you," the man said. "Don't flash that light of yours above the rail!"

When Bill had on the oilskins, the man remarked:

"This is something that you'll have to be doing alone; just got a hurry call to-night, and I am going out with you. It's a little rough sometimes, but when these sports with lots of money want a thing, they want it quick. This is a big bay; see that light over there? That's Cherry Island; now that water ahead goes out into the lake, and we're going out. It 'll be rough, and it's darker than pitch

—but we can't mind that. Business is business."

He was silent for a time, but more and more the boat plunged to the fall of the swell, and when they swung clear of the land to the northward a light appeared, flashing in the gloom.

"See that light!" the man said. "That's a ten-second flash, ten-second eclipse; you want to remember that. We could go inside of it on a calm night, but to-night we must go outside; the waves are breaking inside of that buoy now. Woosh! But it's blowing!"

It was a gale, sure enough, rising every minute, and the launch pitched and plunged till the man turned toward the north, and then it rolled till Bill thought it would roll over. As if reading his thoughts, the man reassured him:

"She won't go over; she's a self-bailer, and the water coming over the sides goes right out. I have the pump running. Flash your light on my foot; keep it under the rail. See—that knob there is the pump. Have a centrifugal wheel-pump, and that knob engages it with the belt."

On all sides of them rose the waves, and as they broke they seemed to flash like snow

in the dark. There were only a few stars shining, and these were rapidly fading from view, one by one. The lights ashore looked very comfortable to Bill, as he sat there in the crinkly oilskins, tossed and lifted and dropped about by the plunging and staggering of the boat.

Ahead of them was a long fence of lights, apparently. It was set right out in the sea, the reflections dancing across the water and flaring through the foam. As they drove ahead to pass to starboard of the lights, the waves suddenly flattened out and the wind began to come in breaking puffs. The lights disappeared behind land. They were in the lee of islands, Bill discovered. The man beside him shut off the engine, and the boat turned to the wheel and approached the land. The man started the engine reverse, and the boat stopped short and rocked in the side wash from the waves rolling in past the islands on either side of them. Above the roar of the wind they could hear the sea breaking.

"Keep your eyes open, sonny," the man half whispered; "this is where they said to meet 'em."

"Yes, sir!" Bill answered.

Suddenly, to the northward, Bill caught a flicker of light, twice.

"There's a light flashed to the north," he said, "twice."

"Good—now hold your hand over that flash I gave you, just a crack open between your fingers, and flash it once. Count twenty and flash again; count slow—one—two—three—that way."

"Yes, sir," Bill answered, and making the flash, he counted twenty, and, flashed again.

"Just right!" the captain approved.

Then a dark shape came out of the gloom, gliding over the water. It came alongside, and Bill saw that it was a launch much like the one he was in. It was dripping wet and water was swashing in the hold.

"Pretty rough!" the man on board the stranger commented. "Got to fix the pump before I can start back."

"Don't lose any time; I'll help. Heave those packages over. All right! Catch them, kid, and hand them aft into the pit."

Bill caught the packages as they came—twelve of them, all wrapped up in rubber, and weighing perhaps forty pounds each. When they were in the pit, Captain Jogues climbed on board the stranger, remarking to Bill:

"Stow those bundles in the pit, and draw the tarpaulin over them."

Bill did as he was told, and he could see the faint glow of light as the two men worked down in the engine-pit of the launch alongside.

Wondering why the boats didn't bump together and scrape their sides, Bill found that there were several fenders hanging along both sides of the boat he was on, as well as on the other.

He waited patiently, and it did not take long for the two men to fix things as they should be.

"Now she's all right; it's a nasty night! You don't want to linger any—but don't run into anything."

"It's mighty rough off the head of Wolfe—"

"Well, go down the river then and around the foot—but look out! No chances, though!"

"I'll go around the head; it's safest that way, I think."

"So do I. That pump 'll bail you out now, and the engine is in dry, too. You've done it in worse—"

"You bet I have. So long!"

"So long!"

The boats jerked apart, and, cutting around each other in half-circles, away they went back on their courses. Captain Jogues said not a word on the way back. He did not

turn in at the buoy light, but headed far away to the southwest—and how they did catch the storm when they were clear of the islands!

The gale was still rising, and one moment the boat was so far down in the trough of the waves that on either side of them were hills of water, crested with foam. Then the launch shot up and up and over the breaking crest and down the slope beyond, rocking in the side-winders and plowing and plunging along, the motor purring and humming with comforting monotony in the engine-pit.

Then the waves grew too high for the boat to run in their trough, but the man merely turned westward into the seas, for miles, and then turned diagonally to the eastward again, and as suddenly as before they ran out of the storm into shelter under a lee. They plowed inshore, and Captain Jogues flashed a light three times quickly. A single flash answered them. They ran alongside a board-walk dock, and two men came down to take the packages and carry them up the walk to the shore. Bill held the launch to the dock by a stout stake.

Not a word was spoken, that he heard, till Jogues remarked in a low voice:

"All right!"

"Good! S'long!" the answer returned.

As Captain Jogues backed clear of the dock, Bill heard a crunching of wheels up the shore, and saw an automobile, with no lights burning, draw away into the woods. A minute later, however, down the shore, a light suddenly flared out, and the automobile darted away along a road.

"I wondered if those fellows were going to take a chance of getting arrested, going without their automobile lights burning!" Jogues cackled. "Those millionaire people are queer Dicks, though; they'd just as soon be arrested as to run over chickens. They've got some running to do—got to get those bundles to the express train in the morning!"

"Must be awfully important!" Bill suggested.

"It is; it seems just as though they lie awake nights thinking of new ways to spend their money. Why, he could have sent them from Cape Vincent in the morning just as well as not; but no, blow high or low, they had to come this way. If he heard I'd said anything about it, I'd lose my contract, and you your job. I wouldn't be surprised if he was trying us to see if we knew enough to keep

our mouths shut. That's a way those fellows have."

"I've heard stories about those Thousand-Islanders, myself," Bill commented.

"Well, don't repeat any of them till we see what the man is up to; that's my advice."

"It's funny business!" Bill repeated to himself, and then he had to hang on and could only look around, with hardly time to think, as they rolled out into the plunging waves.

VIII

A NIGHT VISITOR

MILES BRETON slept on after Bill and Captain Jogues stole away in the night. He was, as Captain Jogues had remarked, very tired. It was a long time before he awoke. When he did, it was a sudden awakening. Gyp, who had grown partly reconciled to Captain Jogues, had not growled loudly enough to awaken Miles when that party appeared, but now he began to whine and bark and retreat into the little tent.

It was Gyp who awakened Miles. With a start he sat up, as he awoke, and reached to shake Bill, but Bill was gone. This startled Miles, and he scrambled to the door and peered out into the night. The wind was roaring, and even in that little bay waves were lapping along the sand, sounding noisily in the dark. Miles could see the woods dimly, and the water more clearly, for the surface caught and reflected the faint sky-light.

Bill was nowhere in sight, and Miles called: "Bill! Bill! Where are you?"

No answer came, but Gyp was full of anxiety, glancing into Miles's face with his eyes shining pink in the night, and then leaning to peer out around the edge of the tent to the left, as if what worried him was in that direction.

Miles was unused to the great outdoors; this was the first time he had ever been really alone in his life. Now he did not know exactly where he was, and his partner, on whom he had been relying, was missing. For a few minutes Miles sat in half-fear, half-worry, wondering if Bill had gone walking in his sleep, as boys sometimes do.

"What is it, Gyp?" he asked the dog, and Gyp leaned farther, to look out the door, keeping his eyes on the brush a few yards away. Something there was making the dog anxious, and Miles found himself growing cold with excitement and doubt.

"I'll find out what it is!" he muttered to himself, drawing his little electric flashlight and staring in the direction of the dog's gaze.

He could see nothing, and for a time could not make out what to do, and then, very quietly, he crawled out of the opposite side

of the tent, going under the wall and holding it up for Gyp. Then he worked his way across the level to an old path three or four yards behind the tent in the woods, and with Gyp just ahead of him, creeping and silent now, he made his way to find out what was there. Gyp was immeasurably comforting at that minute. He seemed a real comrade to the lad, who had never before been alone out-of-doors.

Suddenly, as he looked toward the water through the edge of the brush and woods, he saw a figure lying prone on the ground, several yards ahead of him—the form of a man who was watching. Gyp did not growl, but seemed rather to enjoy the affair now, as if it was some good game to play.

Miles put his flashlight forward and suddenly slid the catch. Instantly the beam of light flashed, and there, sure enough, was a man springing to his feet with an exclamation, blinking.

"Who are you? What do you want?" demanded Miles, and the man, with his face grimacing, answered:

"Why—why, I just came in here to rest a bit. I saw your tent. I thought if it rained, as it threatened to do, you'd take me in awhile."

"Have you seen my partner?" Miles demanded.

"Why—why, two or three hours ago two fellows went away in the skiff."

"They did! That must have been Captain Jogues who came after him."

"Probably. You mean a man with a gray launch?"

"Yes—"

"Where did they go?"

"Why, I didn't know they were gone! But it's a queer business all around!"

"How is that?"

"Why, that man hired us, and takes us around in his automobile, and when he sets us down, instead of being at our old camp, we're here."

"Where did you have your camp before?"

"On Black River Bay."

"Is that so? You're Miles Breton or Will Sayne, then?"

"Yes, Breton. But how did you know?"

"Oh, a lady gave me a lunch wrapped up in a newspaper, and the paper told about it."

"Everybody seems to know who we are," Miles chuckled. "Even—even—"

"Even hoboes!" the man filled in the comment.

"Just what I was thinking!" Miles laughed. "Won't you come into the tent? I wouldn't be surprised if it did rain. Wonder where Bill is?"

The man followed Miles to the little tent, and Miles lighted the lantern. His visitor was a tall, slender man, dressed in dark clothes, a woolen shirt, and a red handkerchief tied around his neck. He wore a dark-gray bicycle-cap. His eyes were blue and twinkling. He was a fine-looking young man, much weather-beaten in the face, as if he had looked many a gale in the eye.

As they sat there on the ground-cloth, with Gyp holding his head out to have his ears pulled by the visitor, they took stock of each other. The man's eyes turned to the outfit lying in one corner, and he felt of the tent-cloth.

"It's pretty light to shed rain," he commented. "You'll be wet down the first rain with that thing!"

"I don't think so; Bill water-proofed it. You see, if you take four or five cakes of soap, dissolved in boiling water, and then dip the cloth in it, that fills the pores full of soap. Then you take a pound of alum, more or less, and dissolve that in a pail of water, and

dip the soapy cloth in that. The alum makes the soap insoluble and the water runs off it. Of course you have to put it through the process every once in a while, because the soap breaks out, but it is easier to do that than lug around a big heavy tent."

"I never heard of that before. I'll try that myself. It would make a good boat cover. Wonder how it would work on clothes?"

"I guess it shrinks them some."

"It would be good for a big overshirt; I need that. Um-m. Going to take a trip up the Lakes?"

"Yes," Miles answered the man, and then, under the skilful questioning and comments, he told all about how they started on the trip and how they were earning their own way as they went.

"I've learned a good deal just since we started!" Miles exclaimed. "I never worked so hard in my life as steering that automobile all around. Lots of my folks have automobiles, but they were always afraid to let me run them."

"Captain Jogues is real educational," the man commented. "You'll learn a good deal, going up the Lakes with him. It's a good idea. Well, I think I'll just travel on. You

see, fellows like me can't stay in one place very long. Good night!"

The man ducked through the doorway, and when Miles raised the flap to look after him he was gone, vanished in the night.

"He's a real nice fellow!" Miles commented, "If I'd thought— Say, mister!"

"What's the matter?" came back from the woods.

"I thought maybe you'd like a job working for Captain Jogues."

"What!" Then the man laughed deeply. "I think he would be real surprised having a man like me working for him. No, thank you, kid! My kind aren't that kind of workers. Mostly we work people, instead of having them work us."

Miles heard the man retreating through the brush, chuckling as he went. Miles could hear his laugh long after he stopped breaking the brush, having evidently found a road to walk in.

"He's a queer Dick!" Miles thought, sagely. "This world seems to be full of queer Dicks when you get out into it. I wonder what has become of Bill? I never heard of a man hiring anybody to do things like that man Jogues does."

There was no more sleep for Miles as he thought of Bill gone and the tramp out there in the brush, and the fact that he himself did not even know where he was. He sat there on the ground-cloth in the tent, listening to the wind roar and the waves break somewhere out on the shore. He could not tell in which direction that was.

Suddenly, as he sat there, he heard the scraping of a boat on the sand, and, springing up to look out, he saw the bow of a skiff in the light from the lantern.

"Hello!" Miles shouted.

"Hello, yourself!" returned the familiar tones of Bill's voice. "Worried about me?"

"Yes; when I found you gone I couldn't imagine—"

"Well, it's that employer of ours. He seems to have all kinds of odd jobs for a man to do; or, rather, the men that hire him have all kinds of odd jobs for him to do, and he has us to help him. Woosh! But I've had a trip of it to-night!"

Having hauled the skiff up and made it fast by a line run up to a tree, he came into the tent and sat down, apparently tired.

"Where have you been?" Miles asked.

"Why, all over this end of Lake Ontario, I

should judge," Bill exclaimed. "Have you anything to eat there? I'm most starved!"

Miles reached into the grub basket and pulled out some things to eat, and Bill told him about the coming of Captain Jogues and of the long trip across the tumbling waters.

"He brought me in and put me into the skiff, just now, and away he went again. Gracious! I never saw such waves or had such a shaking up in my life—it was great! And, say, he's going to let us run around that way for him. You and me—think of that! Why, we'll learn all about motor-boating and navigation and all that kind of thing, working for him. It 'll be a regular education for us both!"

So Bill told of his experiences, and when he was through with the tale of breathless excitement in the tumbling little speed launch, Miles remembered the visitor whom he had surprised lying in the brush near the tent.

"You sneaked out the other side of the tent and crept onto him that way!" Bill cried, enthusiastically, interrupting the narrative. "Why, Miles, nobody could have done it better than that. You'll make a dandy woodsman, doing things like that without knowing how!"

Miles blushed under the enthusiastic praise, and then went on and told about the man who had come, what he said, and how he slipped away in the night, ridiculing the idea of going to work for Captain Jogues.

Bill puzzled over the idea for a long time, for there was something as mysterious in the appearance and actions of the midnight visitor as in those of Captain Jogues himself.

"I don't know what to make of this business," Bill said, frankly. "I never heard of any business like this—midnight motor-boat expresses, and tramps that lie in the brush miles from the railroad—all that kind of thing—"

"Are we far from the railroad?"

"Why—I— That's so, I don't know where we are!" Bill admitted. "He gave me two dollars more to-night; said I'd done two days' work, and so had a right to another day's pay. I never heard of a man doing that way—"

He hesitated and looked around him doubtfully.

"It's coming daylight!" Miles exclaimed. "We've surely had a night of it!"

Sure enough, the lantern had suddenly grown dim and the light from beyond the

tent was brighter. On looking out, Bill found that it was raining at last, and that the clouds were scudding, apparently almost touching the tops of the trees.

"Well, we may as well sleep by day if we must work by night," Bill remarked, thoughtfully.

"I feel pretty sleepy myself," Miles assented, and, drawing down the tent-flap, they made everything snug and turned in to make up for their broken night's rest.

IX

"GO TO X"

IT was nearly noon when Miles and Bill awoke from their sleep. It was raining hard and the wind was still blowing, but not so strongly. They decided to forego a hot breakfast, hoping that the afternoon would bring clearer weather, or a let-up that would enable them to build a fire without exposure to the rain. Bill thought he saw streaks in the clouds that indicated a lull, and two or three hours later patches of blue sky appeared. The rain came more and more fitfully, and within the hour the storm had passed, leaving sunny skies and beautiful white clouds. The wind fell rapidly to a mere breeze, and then to summer quiet.

"He didn't say what we should do now," Bill commented. "I suppose we'll have to stay here till he comes for us."

To pass the time they gathered a heap of firewood, intending to build a fine large fire

that night. It was driftwood from the open beach beyond the little bay. They rowed out in the skiff, and found that by day they could see a great sheet of water, like a mountain lake, green as the waters of Ontario itself.

They ate a hot supper, and when night fell they lit the pile of wood on the beach and sat back on the sand to enjoy it. The flames rose twenty feet in the air, a wonderful pyramid of light varied with the darting tongues of fiery serpents.

"Hello!" a voice suddenly hailed from behind, and, looking, they saw a youth of about their own age, who continued, "Are you fellows Miles and Bill?"

"Those are our names," Bill answered.

"Well, there was a man on a motor-cycle give me this for you."

He handed Bill a package shaped something like a book, wrapped up in a black rubber sheet and tied with stout cord.

"Who was it?" Bill asked, puzzled.

"I don't know who it was; he was in a hurry, and said he couldn't go with it himself. I met him in the road over near Chaumont, about three miles from here. He give me a dollar."

Bill untied the package and found a large

map neatly folded, and when he opened the map a slip of paper fell out. He picked up the paper, and saw written on one side with a black-ink typewriter:

"Go to X.—J."

"Where's X?" the visitor demanded, but Bill gave Miles a meaning glance, and answered, casually:

"He's a fellow we work for. Well, I suppose we'd better get ready to go."

His eye had caught a black-ink "X" on the chart, and he knew that when one works for a man an order means prompt obedience.

"Going to start to-night?" Miles exclaimed, surprised.

"Certainly. I don't know what it means, but away we go!"

Working together, Miles and Bill broke camp, rolled up blankets and ground-cloth, struck the tent, and emptied the skiff of the water which had fallen into it during the rain-storm.

"Come on, Gyp!" Bill cried, having searched the ground to make certain that nothing was left behind, and while the youth on the shore shoved them off he set the oars. "You fellows don't delay none about obeying orders, do you?" the lad remarked.

"We can't afford to linger," Bill told him. "There's no telling how important this may be. Much obliged to you for bringing the message."

"That's all right; he paid me good for it!"

"What kind of a looking man was he?" Bill asked with sudden thought.

"Quite a big fellow, with a black mustache and those automobile spectacles."

Although the fire was built on the sand, some distance from the woods loam, they poured water on it to make sure that no sparks would start a blaze in the leaves. Then, with Bill pulling, they were soon down at the edge of the lake-like bay. There, by the light of their electric flashes, they studied the map, which bore the inscription, "Coast Chart No. 1, Lake Ontario." The black "X" which Bill had found was on the shore of Lake Ontario east of the southern end of Fox Island. From the shape of the lake-like bay, Bill made up his mind that it must be Chaumont Bay, and that to get around to the "X" they must go across to Point Peninsula and coast around it to the gas-buoy which they knew they had seen before, because on the chart it was "Flash White, 10 Second, Eclipse 10 second."

Having decided on their whereabouts and their destination, they rowed out into the bay, and across to a point of land they could see dimly by the starlight. When they reached this point, they saw a light ahead, which they knew to be Cherry Island light. Coasting along Peninsula Point shore, they swung around gradually into a nearly westerly course, according to the North Star.

The boat rose and fell more and more with the rollers coming in from the open lake. The boys could hear the long-drawn roaring on the Point, where the dead sea was breaking over the shoals. It had an ominous sound in the night, but to Bill, who had been out in the gale the night before, this seemed a slight roll, even for a skiff, and Miles was not afraid.

"As long as the waves aren't breaking, our boat will rise on them all right," Bill said, and so, keeping well offshore, clear of the breakers, they went out on the open lake, where not a breath of wind was stirring, but where the thunder of the storm echoed in the falling of the surf on the beach inshore, along which they coasted.

They rounded the buoy and headed away nearly due north for Fox Island, Bill rowing and Miles paddling. After the first few

rollers the boys fell into the swing of the lake sea. When they were a little used to them the waves did not seem at all high. They felt safe as long as they did not lose sight of the gas-buoy, and rejoiced in the chance to go alone at night across the open waters.

It was not far to row, hardly twelve miles, and only the night made it an adventure. When they came to the dark shape of Fox Island they found the swells higher, but that was because the water there was shoal. As they ran half a mile inshore from the island, the waves became a mere wash, for they were sheltered by the island from the northwest, whence the rollers came.

"We'll have trouble finding the exact spot where that 'X' is," Bill remarked, looking along the shore to the eastward. "We'd better run in and coast along there and see if there is any place for us to land in."

Where they came to the shore there was an open field, but a little farther along they came to woods. They rowed there for nearly a mile, but saw nothing to indicate where they should land.

"We'll have to wait for daybreak," Miles suggested; "we can land almost anywhere along there now, and then in the morning

we'll just run along the top of the bank and find that 'X.'"

"I suppose they've scratched it in the ground, too, so we'll know where it is!" Bill chuckled. They headed toward the shore and landed, running the skiff well up the steep beach.

They turned on their flashes and lighted a lantern. Then they carried their duffle up to the top of the bank and prepared to stake down their camp again. It was a matter of only a few minutes to swing their tent from a rope between two trees and stake it out with six stakes. In twenty minutes they were snug for the night again.

"There!" Bill remarked, with satisfaction. "If this isn't 'X' I don't know where 'X' is."

"Quite true, quite true!" a voice remarked from the gloom in the woods behind them. "You struck within twenty rods of it!"

Into the circle of lantern-light stepped Captain Jogues, smiling with satisfaction.

"Where'd you come from?" Miles exploded.

"A part of our agreement was, 'No questions asked,' if I remember correctly," was the man's rebuke.

"I beg your pardon!" Miles exclaimed.

"That's all right—for this time!" the

quixotic little man snapped. "Now, if you don't mind, just stow all those things away again; not in the boat, but in bundles. Then we'll go take a walk. Don't forget to bring your chart—the one I sent you. It is quite necessary that you know local geography, and it is time you had a lesson. Geography is a very important matter in business—particularly in my express business."

Quite too astonished to answer or make any comment, the two boys bundled up their outfit again, and heaped it in some brush as the man directed. Then the three of them carried the skiff up the gravel slope and into the same brush, where they turned it over. With the water-pail the man told them to wash away their tracks in a little bed of sand on the gravel.

"That will prevent any one from seeing where your things are, and stealing them," the man remarked. "You must be quite careful about sneak-thieves. I must caution you that some of the packages you have to carry in my service are of very great value, and under no circumstances are you to permit any one to touch them. All express messengers are expected to fight till they die in defense of property intrusted in their care. Come on!"

He led them through the brush and woods, in and out with a sureness that Bill, who was woods trained, respected. Before long they came to a veritable thicket of evergreens. Here the man paused to remark:

"Of course, you understand that my little camps are not to be betrayed to any one. I am a great lover of seclusion and I want no intruders. You'll promise not to talk about this business. Secrecy is one of the great essentials of modern business, especially in the small beginnings. My business is not very large as yet."

"Of course we won't say anything about it," Miles hastened to say.

"You see, there are monopolies which might object to my beginning business in opposition to them," the man remarked, leading the way into the thicket.

In about five minutes they came to a mass and tangle of briers and brush. The man walked along its side, and then, stooping so low as almost to crawl, he entered the place. The boys followed. Bill, raising his head too high, bumped it on a substantial wooden beam. A moment later the man raised a trap-door and they climbed up through a hole to the floor of a room which the man's flash

revealed to be about twelve feet square and eight or nine feet high.

It was apparently an ordinary woods camp, with several cots folded up against the wall, some fine light-colored blankets hanging from rafters overhead, an oil-stove, cooking utensils, and other paraphernalia of the outdoors life. On the wall hung two shot-guns and two small rifles—evidently of twenty-two caliber. Also, there was fishing-tackle, evidently of fine quality.

"Now you'll stay here till I send for you or come for you. In a night or two you will have your own little trip to make alone. Of course, you'll see to it that no one knows where you are stopping, because I hate to have people always coming around my private camps, interfering with my seclusion. It is bad enough to have to work all winter with the mob all around one. Later, I'll put you in charge of one of the express stations. Good night!"

His light flashed out. They heard him crawling down through the trap-door and under the floor. The trap slammed down, and a minute later the brush rustled. Their employer was gone. After a time Bill turned on his flash and, turning it on the floor, saw

the trap, with a ring for raising it. On the floor were two two-dollar bills.

"Did you ever in all your life hear of such a thing as this?" Bill whispered.

Miles shook his head. There was a hanging-lamp over the table, full of oil and clean. Bill lighted it, and turned off the flash to save the battery, which would burn only three or four hours continuously, or six or seven intermittently.

There were windows, high up in the side of the walls, and one of them opened easily. It was covered with copper mosquito-netting.

"Well, we might as well try to get our sleep out!" Bill remarked. "I don't believe any one else has any such job as we've found, the first clip!"

"Nor I!" Miles assented.

The boys brought out two cots and made their beds. Even Gyp had a fine bed in a box full of excelsior in one corner.

X

GEOGRAPHY LESSONS

IT was nearly noon when the two boys awoke from their sound sleep. The sun shone down through the leaves and branches of the surrounding trees, lighting up the little camp. As they stood up to look around they were astonished to find that there was no other door than the trap, although on examining the walls closely they found where there had been an opening which now was fastened tight. Bill raised the trap, and found that the tunnel entrance was lined with gravel, and that on the bottom were boards, to crawl on.

"This is one of those portable houses," Bill decided at last, "but it's been fixed over. That man is a queer fellow!"

"He is that; he talks business, and has those things like they have in dime novels," Miles remarked — "caves and that sort of thing."

"All boys talk about those things," Bill commented, wisely. "But most boys never have things like this. I wonder what he *is* up to?"

Miles could not guess, and they rummaged around in the cupboards and found potatoes, eggs, ham, and other things to eat. They cooked breakfast on the oil-stove, opening up the windows to let in fresh air and blow out the smoke. A well-pump came up in one corner of the room into a sink. They looked over the firearms, and Bill showed Miles how to load and unload them, gave him a lesson in aiming and pulling the trigger of an empty rifle, and then they spread the map down on the table and began to study it.

They knew now exactly where they were, and with a splinter of wood they picked out the names of places on the chart in the immediate vicinity, gradually extending their examination till they found the St. Lawrence River and Wolfe Island to the north and Black River Bay to the south. They could make out about where they had been on Chaumont Bay.

"Just look at those names!" Miles exclaimed. "Grenadier Island, Wolfe Island,

Howe Island, Kingston, Amherst Island, St. Lawrence River, Cape Vincent, Sackett's Harbor, Carleton Island—why, I hadn't any idea we were so close to history! That's named after General Wolfe, who captured Quebec by climbing to the Plains of Abraham and recited Gray's 'Elegy'—"

"You mean he captured the city by reciting poetry?" Bill asked, slyly.

"You know what I mean. But the poetry did help him to capture the city! If he couldn't see how much better it was to do his duty than just to live, he couldn't have captured cities, and that's what poetry is for—to help you see things better."

"You've the best of it," Bill admitted. "Kingston is where they built the first ship on the Great Lakes—that was back in the French days. I remember how Frontenac met the Iroquois chiefs there and painted two scows red and blue, and with pictures, so the Indians would be surprised. They thought the French soldiers, in two lines all the way from the Indian camps to the French camp, was more surprising, though. They began to build ships at Kingston in the 1670's, and they have been building them there ever since. There's Oswego; that's where the British

raiders used to land to go through the Iroquois towns on their way down to the Mohawk Valley. They had camps on all of these islands around here—Grenadier Island gets its name from the soldiers camped there. On Carleton Island they had a big fort, and somebody stole the troops' pay chest. Some say it is buried on the island yet, but some say it was dug up thirty years or so ago. I read a story about it in one of the Watertown papers just awhile ago."

So for hours they read the chart, and hardly realized they were working till a crick in his neck reminded Miles that he had been sitting in one position for a long time. When he remarked it to Bill, his companion suggested that they box awhile to limber up.

"Wish we had a pair of boxing-gloves," Bill remarked, looking around the room which had so many sporting articles. There was a chest in one corner with some canned-goods boxes on it, and Bill recognized the conventional camp chest of wooden slats and wire woven.

He set down the canned goods and raised the cover. There were fencing-masks, runners' shoes, fishing-reels, a dozen small cameras, and dozens of rolls of films, count-

less odds and ends, and in one corner a fine set of boxing-gloves, a deflated punching-bag, and elastic ceiling and floor pieces.

"He's an all-around sportsman," Bill remarked, throwing out the gloves and the punching-bag.

In a few minutes they had the bag swung to a rafter and a ring in the floor, and began to punch it. They had great fun, but neither one of them was particularly agile, Miles being rather quicker and better than Bill, because he had boxed and punched a bag down at the Averis livery barn.

They were soon breathless. Except for a few old newspapers they had nothing to read, and time began to drag heavily as night came down. They prepared supper, and after supper made up their beds on the cots. They did not like to go away for a walk, for fear their employer would come and miss them. As it proved, however, he did not appear till nearly midnight, after they were at last asleep. Gyp warned the boys of his approach, and, after a little suspense on the part of the boys, the man came popping up through the trap-door, grinning.

"Well, you're comfortable," he commented, blinking around at the punching-bag, the cots,

and everything. "Good idea—and just like boys, for all the world. Now, what I have come to tell you is, to learn all about that chart you have there—where every place is, and the courses you'll have to run, say from Upper Gap to Cherry Island, and from Nine Mile Point to Henderson Bay, and in all directions from around here. If you're going to run a marine express, you've surely to learn the courses and the harbors and landing-places—all that kind of thing."

He was apparently much gratified to find the chart already spread out on the table.

"What have you been doing?" he demanded.

"Why, we were looking up the lay of the land around here—spent four or five hours at it," Bill told him.

"That's good. That's the way to do it. Now, see here—"

With that he began to point out places on the chart—Bateau Channel, Brother Islands, Collins Bay, Little Cataraqui Bay, Bedford Creek, Henderson Harbor, Muskalonge Bay, Perch Creek, and other north and south side places.

"You'll have to know how to find all those places, and find 'em night and day, and in the

fog and in the storms—the way you and I did, Mr. Bill!" the man snapped. "It always does seem as though the darker the weather and the nastier the night the more we have to tote packages around. But it's a man's living, his income. When you learn how, you've a lot of information that is worth having. Many and many a young man, just going out to earn his own way, would give a good deal to have such practical experience as you lads are going to have in seamanship, motor-boating, night-and-day work. It's going to be hard, sometimes. You never know when some one will want something landed on the beach away down toward Oswego—or where!"

"We surely do appreciate the opportunity, Captain Jogues," Bill remarked, gratefully.

It lacked an hour of daylight when the captain suddenly popped up out of his chair and paced back and forth in the cabin thoughtfully, going to look at the barometer which hung at one of the windows.

"I don't know whether the weather is going to stay settled or not. If it does, probably there won't be any one want us; they seldom do in good weather—such is the perversity of business! You earn what you get. There's

a day or two, likely, in which you'll have to stay here, ready any minute for work. Be ready, night-times and day-times, anyhow."

"We'll not go far away," Bill and Miles assured him in a breath.

"Good-by!" he nodded, throwing two two-dollar bills on the table and jumping down into the trap opening, like a woodchuck. In a moment he was gone again.

"A regular Jack-in-the-box," Bill commented, softly.

"In and out of it, too!" Miles chuckled.

They knew as little now about their employer as before, but he was an adequate man, for in the few hours he had been with them he had given them as practical lessons as they had ever had in their lives. He had driven home fact after fact about the map, and thrown in hints about the winds and currents, depths of waters in along-shore places.

As it happened, the very next night the man appeared again.

"You boys ready?" he snapped.

"Yes, sir!" they answered.

"It's fogged up—bad. It's just as I said—work comes in thick weather. Now look at that chart a minute."

They gathered around the chart, and he put his finger on the "X."

"You start here," he said, "and you run due west one hour, and then due north to land—that 'll be another hour, and if it is pretty thick you'll want to run at half-speed after you've gone fifty-five minutes. When you see land ahead, run in till you are about two lengths offshore and lie to. That's Simcoe Island, if you've run right. There's some current there, but you want to hold along that shore, pretty well in. Of course, stand by the reverse gear after fifty minutes, in case you should make better time on the run over than on normal speed."

"Yes, sir," Bill said.

"Put that chart in your pocket. Got your flash? Well, here's an extra one, with fresh batteries. You may not need it, but you'd better be on the safe side. Come, leave that dog behind!"

Gyp rolled his eyes, but the three left him there in the cabin. They crawled through the thicket and into the partly open woods, whence they headed straight for the lake, and, arriving on the shore, they saw a gray mist—heavy fog over everything. In the mist at the edge of the water was a dark shape, which

proved to be a little motor-skiff. In this they went out about fifty feet to a dark hull riding at anchor there—the swift motor-boat Bill now knew so well.

"Jump in," the man whispered. "I'm going to try you alone this time. Now remember, one hour west, and north to land. Wait there for your cargo. Then you come due south one hour and twenty minutes, and turn due east. You ought to strike the ten-ten buoy light; pass that due east into Black River Bay and coast along the north shore about fifty feet out, and I'll meet you along there this time. By and by you'll have to land alone, but I'll help you this time. You remember about using that flash? You'll know; they'll flash once, and then once again after about two minutes, till you answer—two flashes quick, two seconds apart. Then they'll flash three times, quick. There are some bundles here to give them, and they've some stuff to give you—a lot of canned stuff, I think."

"All right, sir," Bill answered, slipping into the oilskins, and Miles found a suit of oilskins, too. At Bill's feet, lighted by a faint glow, was a compass.

"All ready?" the man asked, as Bill settled at the wheel.

"All ready!" Bill answered.

"Away you go, then; one hour west, north to land. Then south for one-twenty, and east to the ten-ten buoy, and to Black River Bay. Got it?"

"One west, north one, less five at half-speed beyond; then south one-twenty, and east into Black River Bay."

"Right-o! You're learning fast." The man shoved off, starting the little skiff engine, and the boys heard him chuckling as he swung away in the night.

Bill pushed the self-starter button, and then threw in the gas. The boat began to quiver and water began to purl under the bow. Bill threw the wheel over, the boat came around to due west, where he held it, increasing speed on the straightaway.

Miles shivered as the gray fog whipped past his face; and Bill, watching the compass and the watch set on a frame alongside the compass, felt himself almost trembling. They could see nothing, neither overhead nor alongside—just the faint glow from the compass-and-watch light. Even down there it was thick with particles of moisture.

Suddenly Bill uttered a low exclamation: "We forgot something!" and threw the re-

verse, checking the speed of the boat. "The chart, Miles!"

They took out the chart and held it on their laps to look at it.

"Look," said Bill, "Fox Island is due west of 'X'! I'll have to bear to port. Gracious!"

As the boat sagged down with a swell it rubbed on the bottom, and, looking over the side with the flash, the boys saw a flat, cracked rock. Bill backed the boat a few rods, and then turning due south he ran for five minutes, then due west for twenty minutes, then due north for five minutes, and again due west till he had made up the hour he was to hold the west course.

"Now we go to north," he said; and they settled back while their boat shot into the gloom, purring and shivering along.

"We're away out on Lake Ontario!" Miles gasped with the realization. "It's a regular adventure, isn't it?"

"I should say so. I don't understand it, yet."

They sat in silence for the most part. Once, to the westward, they heard a hoarse rumbling and bellowing.

"That's Pigeon Island Light fog-horn." Bill recognized it and chuckled. "We're all right so far."

After a time he said:

"Get hold of the reverse there! If you see anything ahead throw her over."

Five minutes later Bill cut down the speed by half, and then, a little later still, he cut down to quarter-speed and waited, peering intently into the gloom ahead. He could see nothing in the darkness, when suddenly he heard a low washing sound ahead. Then the bow of the launch suddenly lifted on a wave that rose under them.

"Put 'er over!" Bill commanded, throwing his wheel hard over, too.

It was just in time. In the gloom ahead whirled a dark mass. The flash of the hand lamp revealed a beach.

"Well, we're here," Bill whispered. "Now watch and listen."

Low swells from the lake rolled along the beach noisily. Now that their eyes were accustomed to the fog, they could see the land, knowing it was there. At intervals there were thin streaks in the fog, and they could see quite plainly.

There was a slight current along the shore, besides the swing and flow of waves. The launch swung by slowly, as they could tell by dropping the lead—a weight on a long

line—and letting it drag on the bottom. They heard fog-horns bellowing far and near, and also three long boomings as steamers lying to or creeping along blew warnings to other ships to "keep off."

Ashore they heard the whistle of a locomotive, and the sound of countless wheels rumbling on the tracks behind it—miles away.

Suddenly ahead of them something glowed yellow in the fog. By and by it glowed yellow again.

"The signal!" Miles whispered.

Bill flashed his electric lamp twice, quickly, as he had been told to do. The next instant came the answer, and then a hull came plowing through the fog and alongside.

"Hello, kids!" a heavy voice greeted. "What you got for me?"

"Some bundles."

"All right, pass 'em over."

There were only seven or eight of them wrapped in the black rubber sheets.

"Here's some canned stuff," the man said, and, two and two, the boys took over the rail and put down in the cargo pit a hundred cans that held about a pint each.

"That's all," the man whispered. "Now beat it! Due south one-twenty, east into

Black River Bay, along north side till you meet the captain. Drive like a bird if anybody else hails you. I tell you we've some mean people competing with us."

"All right, sir," Bill answered. "Had I better run up the shore a ways before striking south?"

"That's so; you might hit Horseshoe. Hold sou'west five minutes and then due south. That 'll clear, all right. You're on your job, all right."

"We came near hitting Fox Island, holding due west the way the captain told us," Bill remarked.

"You're all right, kids. So long."

They heard him throw in his clutch, and the boat turned around and shot away nearly northeast. Bill started his own engine, and, holding southwest for five minutes at full speed, he swung slowly around into the true south.

"Now if we can make the ten-ten buoy we'll be all right," he commented to Miles.

XI

A LONESOME LIGHT-KEEPER

FOR exactly an hour and twenty minutes Bill held the true south course, and then he put the wheel over and headed due east. The knowledge that ahead of him was land and that at any minute he might strike it if he had not held his course right on the south leg, grew more and more oppressive. Perhaps he ought to have held an hour and twenty-two minutes instead of an hour and twenty. Perhaps Captain Jogues had missed the right time, as he had missed the right course from "X."

Bill told his doubts to Miles, and they debated the matter as they peered ahead with all their might. They had pushed along more than an hour when suddenly, dead ahead of them, so close at hand that it almost blinded them, a white light flashed in their eyes. Bill threw his wheel hard over as he shrank down as if smitten by a blow. As

they shot past the light it disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared.

"Throw the reverse!" gasped Bill, and Miles, feeling around, found the lever, and as the boat felt the back pull of the propeller, behind them the light flared again in the fog, illuminating the water and the minute particles of mist, making a veritable halo in the night.

Again it disappeared and reappeared. While the launch jockeyed there on the water the boys gathered their wits and found themselves. Suddenly Bill laughed.

"Count the seconds she's on and off!" he suggested, and they counted the flash and then the eclipse.

"It's the ten-ten buoy," they laughed, delightedly.

Straightening the launch up to the east course again, they headed away once more.

"Hit it square in the center!" Bill chuckled. "Captain Jogues must know within the rod how fast this boat goes and how to travel these lake waters. I shouldn't have missed the trip for a lot—if we find him all right on the bay."

They were not destined to have perfectly smooth sailing all the way, however, for suddenly they found land on their starboard

quarter instead of on the port. They could not tell where they were on Black River Bay, except that it must be the south shore, instead of the north shore, where they belonged. Bill, having missed the land by a scrape, turned a little west of north and in a few minutes made the mile across, and then turned eastward along the north side, as he had been ordered to do. Cruising along at quarter-speed, the minutes lengthened to their anxious minds, as they longed to give their boat over to the captain and have done with their night of cruising.

Suddenly, quite without warning, they heard a familiar cackling chuckle.

"Stop 'er!" the voice commanded, and as Miles threw the reverse the little skiff came darting alongside. "You done noble!" the voice continued, having flashed a light on the cans in the pit. "It's quite a cargo you've got there to-night. We'll land just below here and put it ashore."

When Bill had shoved the launch along about a quarter of a mile, Captain Jogues took the cans, two by two, as Miles handed them over to him.

"There! Stop 'er!" the man ordered at last. "Now wait here a little while."

He darted away in the gloom, his motor making no more noise than that of the large launch. It seemed to the boys a long time before he returned, but the watch showed that he was gone only half an hour. His return was as silent as his departure.

"A good night's work," he commented, throwing the painter of the skiff for Miles to make fast to the tow-head at the stern of the launch.

Taking the wheel, Captain Jogues started the engine carefully, and swung the boat around in a large circle. Studying the compass a minute as the boat straightened out, he picked a course which Bill saw was almost southwest, and then drove at full speed, considerably faster than Bill had run the boat. In less than an hour the launch began to lift and sag to swells over shoal water. Suddenly Captain Jogues turned a switch, and the next instant a bright white search-light beam shot into the fog ahead from the bow deck of the launch. The captain peered ahead and slowed down, swinging around to the north carefully.

"All right!" he remarked, as if to himself, and started the engine ahead at full speed again, just as Bill caught a glimpse of a point

of land on the port beam. A few minutes later the boat turned and came in to shore again, passing through a narrow gap and rounding in smartly at a buoy.

"Here we are!" the captain remarked. "Make fast the bow line to that buoy ring. Haul up the skiff, Miles."

"Make fast, sir!" Bill repeated, and so the launch came to rest, and the three went over the side into the skiff, which drove ashore impatiently. They hauled it up the sand beach, tied the painter to a small tree, and ascended to a patch of woods, where in the light of their flashes stood a group of tents. A dog came rushing out to meet them.

"Gyp!" gasped Bill, amazed. "Where did—"

A low, cackling laugh mocked him. He looked, but his employer merely waved his hand.

"That's your tent, boys."

Going into the tent, they found their duffle stacked in one corner, including the paddle of their skiff. There were two cots, with several blankets on them. As they stood there, staring dumfounded, the man suddenly put his head through the doorway.

"I forgot to pay you, boys."

He tossed a crumpled wad on each of their cots, and when, a little later, they straightened them out, they gasped again. They were five-dollar bills.

"I don't know what to make of it!" Miles exclaimed.

"Don't try to make anything of it but money," came through the walls of the tent, with a snap.

Without another word the two boys went to bed, after blowing out the light of the lantern that hung from the ridge-pole on a hook. They were conscious of a graying dawn as they went to sleep; but they were too tired to wonder about the night they had put in. It was noon when a voice called:

"Breakfast!"

The two tumbled out of bed and soon appeared in the little dining-tent, where Captain Jogues was sitting at the head of the table beginning to serve breakfast.

"I've a pretty camp here," the man remarked. "We'll lounge around here awhile, I guess."

After breakfast the boys wandered about, and found that they were on an island. Toward night, after they had eaten their second meal of the day, Captain Jogues suddenly

broke a long silence with the order to break camp.

"I think we'll pull out to-night," he remarked.

"What!" Bill exclaimed, too astonished to hold his tongue.

"Do it! When things happen you learn to keep your expression immobile; don't look like a country farm boy all the time, with your eyes staring out of your head. Learn not to be surprised! It is very necessary in our business that you should not act surprised, though you are ready to burst with amazement. We're going to pack up, now!"

And they did pack up—everything. The tents were struck, the furniture folded up, the dishes stowed away, the bedding put in bags, and all the things carried down to the beach, where they made a pile surprisingly small, considering how large they had loomed in the pretty summer camp clustered there on the island under the trees. Captain Jogues took the things out to the launch and stowed them in the cargo pit.

"Now, boys," he remarked, "I'll just set you across for a while. Up anchor!"

He turned his back on them. With the skiff towing astern, the boat swung out clear

of the island and headed nearly due north by the stars. Wrapped up in oilskins, with never a word of comment, they sat back and watched Captain Jogues and waited for what might happen next.

They passed between two distant shores—islands, as Bill remembered. Then the launch turned somewhat westerly, and after a time Captain Jogues shut off the power.

"Now, boys," he remarked, "I'm going to leave you for a while. That lighthouse ahead there is Center Brother Island, and you go there with your skiff and outfit, and then go up the Bay of Quinte for a day or two; but don't go above the Upper Gap. Just stay along there till I come back. You better hang around Three Brothers Islands."

Without more ado he bundled the boys and Gyp, with their outfit, into the skiff, and while they were fumbling around trying to straighten things out he started up and dashed away in the night, leaving them with only the lighthouse ahead and not the least idea of where they were.

They finally straightened out their load, and with Bill at the oars they rowed toward the light. It was only a short distance to a small, brush-grown knoll there in the waste

of water. It was just a little island several hundred feet from the island on which the lighthouse was built, and they ran in the gloom to a fine gravel bar, where they landed and hauled up the boat. They looked at the sky, and, seeing no threat of storm, they quickly laid down their ground-cloth, on top of that their blankets, and spread their tent-cloth overhead, tent fashion, to keep off the dew. They found that the captain had tossed a chart in with their other things, and by their flash they took their bearings.

Then they turned in, and with a "Good night" went to sleep. They were tired, and slept till long after sunrise, when Gyp began to chase a chipmunk that had somehow found its way to the little island, probably swimming across from the mainland to Amherst Island. Gyp was having great fun with the squirrel when his barking aroused the boys.

They built a fire and cooked a bass for breakfast; and as they were busy Bill heard oars in their locks and saw a boat coming from the lighthouse island. He whispered the news to Miles, and the two ate their breakfast with some questioning in low voices, wondering what the government man would say to them. Bill, looking around hastily,

could see no "No Trespass" signs, and Miles, watching the man in the boat, made up his mind that such a small man could not be so very dangerous unless he had a gun or a warrant, or something like that.

It was a little man, indeed. He had a shaved upper lip and whiskers. He wore a derby-hat and pulled his oars like a fisherman. He blinked and peered through eyes that needed spectacles, and he smiled with the gentle smile of old, contented men.

"Good morning!" he called, sniffing the air. "I can smell ye be'n eating breakfast."

"Oh yes," Bill answered. "Won't you come and have some?"

"Oh no; but I'll land. I'm the light-keeper. It's been three days since anybody was here. I was that lonesome that I made up my mind I'd go to Collins Bay to-day, bright and early. Now why didn't you come to the light?"

"It was so late when we landed in—it was near midnight when we got here."

"But I would of come down and give ye welcome, lads. Why, you're only just boys! Just boys! Well, well—there was a boy stopped here the other day, in his motor-boat; one of those Americans, all alone. You're

Americans, too, I bet. Now, aren't you from the States?"

"Yes, that's where we're from," Bill answered.

"Now why didn't you lads come to the light?" the man demanded almost querulously.

"Why, we didn't— We thought it was too late," Bill explained. "We'd go over now, only you're on your way to town."

"No, sir. We'll go right back. I can go to Collins Bay any time, but Yankee lads don't come visiting any too often."

The boys packed up and stowed their outfit away, except the tent, which was wet with dew, and they left that loose to dry. They were working with team-work now, each falling into his own allotted tasks. That made the camping three times as easy, and, as they had studied the way to do their work, they needed only a few packings to make their startings and stoppings a matter of only a few minutes—no waste and yet no haste. The man, watching them, found Gyp stalking around his heels, and he stooped to pat the dog on the head.

"A bonnie gud dog! A bonnie gud dog!" the man approved, and when they were ready to shove off the man continued, "Come into

the yawl with me, dog. We're all going up to the light!"

Gyp hesitated, but Bill motioned with his hand, and Gyp set himself in the stern-seat of the light-keeper's yawl, where he wriggled and waved his tail and cocked one ear and the other eye and hung out his tongue, keeping his attention on his companions. Bill rowed the boys' skiff while the old man pulled his own, talking the while to Gyp.

"A dog 'd be gud company," he said, "but I prefer chickens and torkeys; they lay eggs."

This remark made the boys chuckle, for no doubt a dog would eat its head off on an island no larger than Center Brother Island, which is only a few hundred feet long.

"My name is Captain Daniel Webb," the man said to them, when they were on the island and walking up to the lighthouse. "I live on Amherst Island, which is over there, after the season closes. I was a fisherman before I became lighthouse-keeper. It's a gud job for an old man. I may not be here long, now. I'm more than eighty years old. W'u'd you believe it? Nobody does. But likely I'll not be here long!"

"You'll live a good many years yet!" Miles

exclaimed, hardly able to believe the wiry little man was as old as he said.

"Of course I expect to—a gud while yet. But not here. You see, the administration has changed, and I b'long to the wrong party!"

"Oh, you have politics in Canada, then?" Miles asked.

"Do we? You might think so af you knew it all!"

He took them up to the light and showed them the two-burner lamps, with the wonderful French prisms, and he raised two or three of the curtains to show them the view. They could look afar over the waters, and, looking down, they could see the chickens and turkeys that laid eggs and were therefore preferable to a Gyp in the estimation of the light-keeper.

The old man talked a good deal. He told them stories of the lake fishing, of one catch of eighteen hundred lake trout that he and a partner caught. His wife could knit a pound of linen a day into gill-nets, he said, and his daughters were as good knitters, too. Of late years, however, it was cheaper to buy the machine-knit nets than to knit them by hand.

The boys were in no hurry, and before they knew it it was dinner-time. After dinner they walked around the shore of the island, the

old man pointing out the shoals and the spires of distant village churches. He told them that he could remember when Amherst Island was only a pasture; he was an old pioneer and the country had changed since he was a boy!

Before they knew it the afternoon was gone. Bill and Miles hardly knew what to do, but after talking the matter over together they decided to stay there overnight, putting up their camp on the grass near the lighthouse.

When dusk came, the old man took them up to the light, and they watched him fill the lamp, trim the wicks, and wipe out the chimney. When they came down again night was falling and the stars were coming out—the fine, bright stars of the North, undimmed by murks or dust.

"Let's take a little row," Miles suggested. "I feel just like it."

"All right," Bill answered.

Accordingly, they walked down the island, out on the boat-landing, and shoved off in their skiff. Over the dark waters was the soundless gloom of night, and they pulled up the bay for a mile, looking around, just adventuring, as youths in strange places do, happy

in their freedom. Nothing ruffled the surface of the water anywhere that they could see.

"How far is it to Bawth?" a voice suddenly demanded from somewhere ahead, repeating it impatiently. "How far is it to Bawth?"

With a start Gyp and the boys looked around. They could see the surface of the water far and wide, and there was nothing in sight, no boat of any kind.

"I say, now, if you can't tell how far it is to Bawth, how far is it to Collins Bay?" the voice demanded.

Even Gyp gave a yelp of anxious astonishment at that uncanny hail.

XII

DR. EBEN ELLICK, SWIMMER

THE skiff of the two boys shivered with the combined shivers of the boys and the dog. They could see nothing, and had heard nothing till that voice from the waters ahead demanding to know how far it was to Bath. As they sat there, jerking their heads, two miles from shore, wondering what thing had assailed them, whether bird of the air or monster of the deep, there was a heavy floundering in the water ahead of them, and a moment later the three saw a dark spot on the surface coming toward them, swimming.

"I say, now, did you hear me ask how far is it to Collins Bay?" the thing demanded.

"Yes, sir!" Miles cried. "I don't know!"

"Well, ain't you got a chart?"

"Yes, sir!" the two boys answered, and Gyp reared up on the bow with a savage growl.

"What's that?" the thing demanded, stopping where it swam.

"It's a dog," Bill exclaimed. "Who are you, anyhow?"

"Why, I'm Dr. Eben Ellick, of Amherst Island. I'm going to Bawth."

"A man!" the two boys cried, and Gyp stopped barking to look.

"Of course I'm a man. What 'd you think I was?" the voice returned, and then with a gurgling chuckle the speaker turned. The two boys saw him lunge up out of the water and then go toward the north shore, splashing and lunging like a walrus for a few strokes, after which came the low gurgling of a fast and powerful swimmer rapidly receding in the darkness till the head was out of sight.

The two boys sat staring into the gloom till long after the apparition had disappeared.

"What do you think of that?" Miles demanded.

"Gracious!" Bill exclaimed; "I never heard of anything like that before—right out here in the middle, miles from shore! He must be crazy!"

Without loss of time they rowed back to the island, and when they entered the lighthouse they found the keeper sitting in a rocking-chair, waiting for them.

"Say, Captain Webb," Bill began, "there

was a man swimming up the bay, and he called out, 'How far is it to Bawth?'"

"He did?" The captain began to laugh. "Why, that must have been Dr. Eben Ellick."

"Yes; he said that was his name."

"Well, probably you'll see him again, if you stay around here a day or two. He's a whale, that man is. He came up from Kingston, one time, and asked the captain to put him off up to Amherst before running into Collins Bay. The captain wouldn't, so what does Doc do but jump overboard, derby-hat and satchel and all, and swim ashore. He has an old beaver, a plug-hat, that he wears around swimming across the bay. I've seen him start across when the ice was broken up and moving up and down. He would swim and crawl over the ice, or walk on the big cakes. They say he's got a layer of blubber on him, just like a whale. He can dive thirty or forty feet deep, and swim under a big freight-steamer. He can do anything in the water, I guess, that an otter can. He's scared more than one launch party so bad they couldn't steer straight, with his asking how far it is to 'Bawth' from out the middle of nowhere. He can swim faster than many

a man can row a boat. He ought to be in a circus."

"Well, I never heard anything like that before," admitted Bill. "He scared me almost stiff."

"You'd get used to him around here," Captain Webb assured the boys.

"Yes, we're getting used to lots of things since we started out on our trip," Miles added.

In the morning, at Captain Webb's suggestion, they went fishing for black bass, trolling astern a long line with a flashing spoon on the end. They had rowed around Center Island, and were making a figure "8" course by going around the smaller east-end island, when Miles, who had the line in his hand, felt a sharp jerk. Then followed a series of hard yanks, and he began to pull in excitedly. At last a fish came darting and rolling to the surface, and on lifting it over the side they found they had a bass that would weigh more than two pounds. Gyp, always interested in sporting events, put his head down as the fish turned with a violent flop. The sharp back fins struck Gyp's nose with such force that he sprang backward and went clear over the side of the boat, falling with an astonished

yelp and splash into the water. Bill and Miles burst into a loud laugh, and Gyp promptly swam indignantly to the island, where he climbed to the ridge back and, after properly shaking himself, sat looking the other way, obviously indignant.

"It hurts his dignity to be laughed at," Miles remarked; and Bill nodded. They killed the fish and rowed slowly around the island again. When they had caught three more bass they decided that they had all they wanted, and rowed in to make peace with Gyp, who had curled down in the shade of a bush, pretending to be asleep.

"Come on, Gyp!" Bill called. "Time to go home and have something to eat."

Gyp jumped up and came trotting down to the boat, hopped aboard, stepped disdainfully over the fish which were lying in a pan, and sat down beside Miles in the stern. Nothing more was said about the fish, and when dinner was served Gyp ate his share with satisfaction.

The boys had no idea how long they would be on the island, or when their quondam employer would return for them. They made the most of their little islands, however, and searched them up and down and rowed

around them. On the third day, when a strong west wind rolled the waves down the wide Bay of Quinte, they rowed out into the waves and came in under the lee of the islands, working through the little straits and hugging the sides as they played in the dry gale. The beaches were fine, and the boys and Gyp went in swimming, and played tag, while the light-keeper laughed and chuckled with enjoyment at having so much company around him. At first he kept a sharp eye on Gyp, to make sure that he was not of the chicken-killing and egg-eating type of rogue dog.

"Well, now," he remarked at last, "I do believe he isn't a dog to disturb my torkeys and chicks and their nests. He's a gud dog, Gyp."

The boys and the man "whacked up" good supplies, the man giving eggs, and the boys fish, for instance. They were just sitting down to supper, when who should appear but Captain Jogues himself. They could not tell from what direction he came, but, as he was in oilskins, they surmised that he had come from the open water.

"Well, boys," he remarked, "you seem to be comfortable!"

He sat down to eat with them, and after

supper he talked awhile with the light-keeper about how lonely he must be there, and other commonplaces. When the keeper went up to light the lantern Captain Jogues turned to the boys with the remark:

"Well, the wind has gone down and we may as well get ready to start on."

In ten minutes the boys had their duffle bundled and stowed in the skiff. They threw the captain a line, and he made it fast to the stern of the little cruiser dink, and with a "good-by" to the light-keeper they started out in the gathering dusk, following their employer, who headed away toward the east end of Amherst Island, their boats rocking and rolling as they crossed in the trough of the sea.

Long after dark they rounded the island, and then, skirting along the shore, they came into a little bay. There the captain towed them up alongside the motor-boat, and in a few minutes they were aboard.

"Take up the anchor," the man ordered, when they had their duffle and boats cared for, and then he commanded, "Put on your oilskins; it may be a little rough outside."

As the boys sat down in the pit, Captain Jogues, humped up over the wheel, silent and

almost motionless, started the engine on the self-starter and, turning sharply around, steered out into the open lake and headed westward. There was no light on the boat, except the compass glow far down in the steering-pit. The engine turned with a faint humming, steadily, at medium speed, and the boat went ahead at a twelve or thirteen mile gait, swaggering over the dead sea swell. They met a great freight-steamer coming down the lake, and Captain Jogues swung out to avoid it. Again they saw a bright glow coming, and the captain swung to the north sharply, and passed a passenger-steamer, miles away, rather than within hail, as they would have done had he held his course.

A breeze sprang up and the waves began to rustle as tiny white-caps broke on their crowns. Their boat began to rise and fall on longer, higher waves, coming down with a "souse" and rising heavily, with the water dripping down the sides, flinging off wavelets at the bow, but shivering under the blow of heavier waves.

For hours they drove up the lake, so far from land that it was only occasionally that they caught glimpses of lighthouses along the North Shore. They met steamers at inter-

vals—mostly freighters, the machinery of one, especially, making a thunderous pounding and rattling over the waters between the puffs of wind.

Not once in hours did the man at the wheel utter a word, but as he sat there he seemed watchful and eager, a veritable bundle of nerves and intensity of feeling. What he had on his mind the boys could not imagine, and they did not try to talk, and were as silent as he. It was a beautiful run, but neither Bill nor Miles could conjecture its object.

Suddenly Captain Jogues put the wheel over and the launch swung around and headed due north. Half an hour later the shore loomed ahead of them, a rough sky-line back inland, and down at the shore were lights, some of them miles apart. The launch drove in steadily, the steersman straightening up to peer ahead. As he neared the shore he slowed the engine down, and as the boat ran into the rising and falling of the waves over shoal water he peered anxiously, standing half erect.

Suddenly, with an exclamation of satisfaction, he started the engine, and the boat shot inland toward the beach, where they could hear the roar of waves breaking on the sand

and see the white flash of breaker foam to east and west; the boat began to buck and roll. Once it scraped on the bottom at the end of a lunge. Then they saw still water gleaming ahead of them, and the launch shot into this on the leap of a wave. An instant later the boat swung into a river-bend, and the roar of the rollers suddenly fell to a distant murmur, less than the rustling of the bow cutting the placid surface as they swung up between the wooded banks of a narrow stream.

They landed against a steep willow-grown bank, and the boys made fast. When Bill looked at his watch it was nearly time for daylight. Tired out, they turned in, and it was nearly noon when they awoke. Captain Jogues went up the bank, and when he returned late in the afternoon he was in a cheerful mood. They cast off and headed out into the lake again.

"We have a good boat," he told them. "She's rough to look at, but it isn't the top of a boat that counts; it's the bottom. Those engines there and the slick bottom are what count. This little old cabin has fooled lots of them; they didn't know she was enameled on the bottom. Now we're going up to the head of Lake Erie; but we've got to fool 'em.

A STEAMER IN THE WELLAND CANAL

It isn't dark yet, and we must go as if we were going straight across for a while. You see, you can never tell who is watching you."

When they were out of sight of land in the gloom, he swung around to the westward course, and, quickening speed, took a compass course through the night.

"Put on the lights now," he said after a while. "It's better to obey the marine laws when you can just as well as not."

Somehow that little remark startled Bill, who found himself questioning it sharply in the intervals of quiet that followed. The captain had them get something to eat out of the galley. "Fix enough for all of us," the man remarked. "I forgot all about eating before starting."

The two boys cooked a supper over the gasolene-stove, and Bill offered to take the wheel; but Captain Jogues refused to leave it just then.

"Go ahead and eat. By and by I'll take a snack," he said.

Half an hour later he gave Bill the wheel and sat down in the cabin at the table to eat; but every minute or two he would bob out to look astern and in all directions. He

came to the wheel at last with a handful of sandwiches, and finished his meal there.

When he was through eating he took the wheel and sent the boys to their berths.

"When we get into the Welland there'll be plenty of work to do," he remarked. "Locking through that canal takes time, and a lot of running from lock to lock on the short ones."

The boys thought they had been in their bunks only a few minutes when the captain called them up again.

"Turn out, below there!" he called. "Here we are! Here's the Welland Canal!"

Springing up and girding up their clothes, they made haste to the deck. They were running along a concrete pier lighted by electric lights, and ahead of them was a little settlement or town of some kind.

"Stand by the bow and stern lines!" the man ordered; and as they took their stations, Bill forward, they saw that they had entered a little bay or mouth of a stream. They could hear water falling. Shortly they rounded a bend, and Bill saw ahead the great entrance to a huge lock. The motor-boat turned slowly into it, and the gates swung to behind them. Bill caught an iron head with his line, and

Miles caught another at the stern. The next instant the water boiled up under the boat and began to fill the rectangular space in which they found themselves. The motor-boat rose under the glare of the lights till the deck was higher than the stone on either side—and higher yet, till the water was only a foot or so below the top of the stone. Ahead of them the gate had gradually disappeared in the water till only the top of the gate was visible, and the board walk and rail above that. As the water came to a stand the gates swirled back, and instantly came the order:

"Cast off! All right, boys!"

The motor-boat started again and, passing out of the bright glare of the lock lights, ran up the level where the lights were farther apart. Within five minutes they were in another lock, and beyond that was another.

Some of the time Miles and Bill ran along the tow-path, and some of the time they rode up on the motor-boat. Captain Jogues was curt and hurried as he drove the boat up the canal—the Welland Canal. He turned his head from side to side, started when any one hailed from a lock, spoke crossly whenever either of the boys missed catching a line.

About the seventh lock they met a huge steamer coming down in the night, aglow with lights and looming as large as a city block out there in the farm lands on the low-banked canal.

There was no rest for the boys that night as they ran and waited or leaped to make fast or cast off. It seemed as if they would never get through that endless series of locks. Just as dawn came they saw the strange spectacle of a high steamer on the side of a mountain ahead of them coming down the stair of water levels. They swung around up that mountain-side themselves, shortly, and enjoyed the strange sensation of cruising inland, passing hard-breathing steamers and hearing loud-voiced mates shouting and passing the word from the captains to the snubbers on shore—men who swung the ropes of the great steamers as the two lads swung the ropes of the little motor-boat.

At last the canal led into the open country, over the mountain divide, and away from the steep slope which they had been climbing lock by lock. It was a deep, wide cut through the ridge, and the level was miles long, with only a little current which kept the grass along the sides pointed down toward Lake

Ontario, which they had just left. Ahead of them, somewhere, was Lake Erie.

When they passed the cut in the ridge they came into deserted-looking fields and pasture-like lands, and Captain Jogues increased the speed of his engine more and more, evidently nervous and apprehensive. He watched astern and studied the effect of the waves on the sides of the canal, remarking:

"If your boat does any damage with waves or bumping into things in this canal, they'll get after you; you want to watch out!"

He walked back and forth around the wheel, and as he approached the first railroad bridge he eyed the men at the turnstiles anxiously, as if he were afraid they would not let him through quickly enough.

They passed little settlements and villages, and as they approached Port Colbourne the man remarked to the boys:

"We came in by Port Dalhousie, and we go out by Port Colbourne, if we have good luck."

To the south they had glimpses of long, new, large, brick buildings, which they recognized as paper-mills by the huge piles of short pulp-wood. Captain Jogues said that they were planning another canal to the

southward much larger than the Welland, with only seven locks instead of twenty-seven. Power and pulp companies, he said, were already planning great power developments to use the surplus water of this canal.

"I don't know what it 'll do to Niagara Falls," Captain Jogues chuckled. "I expect when those scenery people understand what's up they'll have to have an arbitration commission to The Hague for a peace conference. You know, boys, there's some folks that think scenery is worth more than dollars. What do you think about that?"

"Well," Bill answered, after a moment, "you take Switzerland, and if it wasn't for the scenery it wouldn't be worth much; but they're developing the water-power over there, too."

"Yes, and when they get the water-power developed, what 'll Switzerland care for the summer-boarder business?"

"They'll miss it; if I were in business I'd rather take care of people out having a lot of fun than be competing with all kinds of other commercial enterprises. The best business in the world is making people have good times, whether you give them good things to eat, or take them on excursions, or make

A CANAL LOCK, WELLAND CANAL

them more comfortable in the houses they live in—"

"Umph! If you make yourself comfortable, and your folks—if you have folks—you've done your duty in this world."

"That's the selfish viewpoint," Bill remarked, and the talk ceased as they headed up the canal through the town and the bridges swung back for them to go by. Bill saw that the captain was growing more and more eager, and when at last, in the middle of the town, he had tossed a paper up the bank to an official with a blue uniform, he turned the engine up again. In a few minutes the motor-boat shot out into an open bay and drove along a great concrete dock, under the frowning walls of a vast gray grain-elevator. Beyond them the boys saw the open lake—miles upon miles of blue water, to reach which they had only to swing through the opening in the breakwater and cut into the waters of the lake itself.

"Phew!" the captain exclaimed. "That was hard work; I always feel as if I was locked up when I am in that bloody canal, and I think this trip was the worst one of all I ever had."

He sat back in the folding wheelman's chair

and wiped his forehead over and over again. The sweat was pouring down his face. He was apparently weakened, as if he had been working at his hardest for hours. The boys could not understand it. The running into the locks and going up through the canal had caused them a lot of work, but they were not anywhere near as tired as he was.

"You see, boys," the man blurted out suddenly, as if he understood what was going on in their minds, "if some of those monopolists knew I was going up through that canal, they would certainly have made trouble for me! Why, do you know, they've even offered rewards before now, just to find out what I am up to in my business; but I'm beating them out! The laws don't protect men starting up competition for big business, the way I am; but I've enough money to give 'em a run—don't you doubt that! Why, just working the way I am now, I'm making a lot of money, paying big dividends on the investment."

He seemed not to care where he was steering, but just drove away out into the lake and enjoyed the wide freedom he found there. It was as if he felt the great lake's breadths and lengths cheering him after the narrow

strip of canal water which had closed in on him.

"I don't believe I'll ever try to run a motor-boat through that canal again," he said. "It's too trying on the nerves; you can never tell what is going to happen in one of those canals. If anything does happen there, you haven't any place in the world to run to!"

This remark struck Bill as so strange that he remembered it long afterward.

The captain held the course nearly south-west for more than an hour, and then, cutting the speed down to a quarter, he turned northward and headed toward shore. After a time he cut down to the slowest speed and cruised along for hours with hardly more than steerage way. Night came, and he still loitered there in the open waters. He searched the shore, which was far away, through night-glasses, as if waiting for the land to go to sleep before venturing to the shore. The boys cleaned house.

"You might just as well go to bed," Captain Jogues remarked. "I might have told you that before. We're going to have a little hunting and fishing for a while now."

The two boys turned in and were soon asleep, for it had been a long, tiresome trip

through the canal, and they were short several hours of rest. Bill's last thought was wondering where he would wake up.

This thought still lingered in his mind when, after dawn, he opened his eyes and saw through a port a near-by bed of alders. Looking out on the other side, he saw a steep bank, on which were growing spruce and balsam trees. The stream, or harbor, was hardly two rods wide.

"Now where are we?" Bill muttered to himself, sitting up. "This looks just like a creek in an Adirondack balsam swamp!"

XIII

A WOODSLAND HIDING-PLACE

IT was later than it seemed, and when Bill looked at his watch he found that it was after eight o'clock. He dressed himself and, seeing that Miles and Captain Jogues were still sleeping, went up on the deck cautiously and looked around.

It was balsam swamp and spruce knolls. There was the alder-bed along the still water, and a few yards distant a trout leaped at a fly hovering over the placid surface. The bend of the grass along the edge of a little flat or meadow showed which was up-stream. Down-stream the water curved around out of sight among the trees of a flat —a mossy, shrubby flat where most of the trees were covered with air plants and almost drowned in the water around their roots.

Suddenly, as Bill was gazing with increasing amazement at what seemed a familiar scene, he saw a deer, a fine, velvet-horned

buck, walk out on the mossy flat, and then stop with a sudden jerk to stare at him. After a look and a sniff the deer turned suddenly and galloped away. At every jump its sharp hoofs cut down through the moss, and it floundered, splashing the water, till it struck the hardpan in the higher timber. There, with the mud falling from its flanks, it stretched out and flew away with long and light jumps, thoroughly frightened.

"Where can we be?" Bill exclaimed aloud, in astonishment. "I didn't suppose there was any wild country anywhere around these Great Lakes, and this must be near Lake Erie, somewhere."

The boat trembled, and he knew that his companions were stirring out of their berths. In a few minutes Captain Jogues came up, yawning; and Miles came up with his eyes growing wider and wider as he gazed for the first time on genuine, unmistakable wilderness.

"Pretty fine country, eh, boys?" Captain Jogues chuckled. "I think it is just as fine a country as I ever saw anywhere. Look, there's a trout jumping! There 're lots of deer in this country, too—liable to see one anywhere around."

"I just saw a fine big buck!" Bill remarked.

"You did? Why on earth didn't you shoot him? Just think how good venison steaks would taste, and we could jerk it, too, if we knew how."

"I can jerk venison," Bill said. "But I thought it was against the law to kill deer in summer?"

"It's different in this part of the country. You see, I own lots of property up here, and they let property-owners do about as they want to. I'm an American; but, as I say, I own land up here. Canada is very convenient for Americans at times. Especially if you live along the Lakes and have interests on both sides the border. Yes, you must kill a deer for us. We'll be here quite a while, off and on. After breakfast you take my little carbine and go kill a deer—if you can."

"Well, leaves are pretty thick, and—"

"That's all right. You try it! There's no such word as 'can't' in my vocabulary, and you boys want to get over feeling that you 'can't' do this or that. It's all a matter of mental habit. If you think you are able to do a thing, why, you can do it. Why, one of our greatest statesmen says that his perfect daring is due to refusing to recognize his

fears, banishing his doubts, and going ahead and doing what it seems best to do, regardless of expedience and wish and possible hurts."

"Who is that?" Miles asked.

"What did I say about asking questions? Besides, if you don't know, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. The idea of any boy being so little informed that he can't pick one of the forty leading politicians and statesmen of the country by a description of his mental attitude or some characteristic which has been exploited in the newspapers daily for ten or twenty years?"

Miles flushed with embarrassment.

"I never read the papers much," he excused himself.

"We don't have much time in schools to read the newspapers." Bill hastened to the rescue of his friend.

"Oh, you don't? I thought so. Every rascal in the world counts on the neglect of boys' and girls' education in newspaper and magazine and current-topic book-reading. Why, they make up their sucker lists from college alumni. I tell you, if I wanted to be in crooked business I'd take for my tools two or three of those high-school or college

boys who never have time to read newspapers, they're so busy hustling over ancient history and the scallawagery of kings long dead! Yes, sir! That's what I'd do! You take a boy that has read newspapers all the while, and heard his father talk politics and elections, and, yes, tariff, and all that kind of thing—you can't fool that kind."

Then the man began to chuckle and laugh and glance around sideways at the boys. Bill and Miles felt decidedly uncomfortable. They made up their minds, then and there, that if they ever taught school they would have their reading-lessons from the newspapers, instead of from so many old-time reading-books. At least, they would read leading weekly and monthly magazines, instead of giving all their time to bringing up boys and girls not to know what is going on in the world. The remark about politics and elections and tariff went home. Bill tried to think what the tariff was, but it was only a shade of an idea relating in some way to the "O Grab Me Act" or "Embargo Act" of about a hundred years ago, in the administration of Thomas Jefferson or Madison—some of those old-timers, anyhow.

"Yes, sir!" the man continued, with a grin

that was a jeer. "You take boys that haven't had any training in up-to-date things, they're the easy-marks — they're the ones smooth-tongued scallawags rope into all kinds of things, and when the time comes for the knavery and one thing and another the chances are those half-baked diploma-kind of people find themselves all mixed up with something they never dreamed wasn't nice and respectable. Why, boys, half the meanness in this world is done by people that don't know it's meanness. If they'd read the papers when they were young and kept up with the big things of the modern world— um-m. I'm no schoolmaster, but I'll tell you kids this much. Before I'm through with you, and if you stick by me, you'll have some lessons that 'll do you a world of good when you come to settle down in some business or be a farmer, or something like that."

"I've learned a great deal already!" Miles cried.

"Be careful you don't learn too much!" the man snapped, tartly. "Now for breakfast. Then Bill must get a deer. Take one of those fly-rods and get a mess of trout while Miles and I make some pancakes and things."

Bill strung up a rod that was in a cabinet,

put on a leader, and, picking a Grizzly King, Yellow Sallie, and Black Gnat for flies, he made a cast.

Instantly the water boiled around the three flies, and before he knew it he had three trout jerking at the line. He gave a cry, and the man came running up on the deck.

"You can't use more than one fly on these waters!" the man exclaimed. "I forgot to tell you."

However, with a large landing-net the man dipped up the three fish—one a half-pound, the other two about a quarter of a pound in weight. Then Bill took off two flies, leaving the Grizzly King on, and in ten minutes he had as many fish as they could eat. It was great fishing. He had never had anything like it before. He dressed the fish, and in half an hour they were served, hot and crisp, fried in corn-meal, with flapjacks and warmed-up potato.

While they were eating, Bill heard a low, distant rumble and stopped to listen.

"What do you hear?" the man asked, sharply.

"Why, it sounds just like a partridge drumming!"

"That's it. We can have pot-pies, too;

don't want to kill any hen partridges—just the cocks. This is a great game country, boys. Only don't kill any moose, if you happen to see one, for that would be wasteful. Ever kill a deer, Miles?"

"I never shot anything—except a revolver one of the boys had at—"

He hesitated as he glanced uneasily at Bill.

"We'll go out together and try it," Bill said. "We'll shoot something. These woods are alive with game—I can see that."

"Lots of it!" said the man. "Look out you don't shoot yourselves."

Taking his bearings by his compass, Bill led the way up on a knoll north of the creek, and after a few hundred yards he came to open hardwood — maple and beech trees, chiefly. The ground was full of deer hoof-prints, and it looked as though almost every log was a drum log for partridges. They saw a good many of the birds, but Bill wanted to shoot a deer if he could.

Suddenly, from a fallen treetop, a great red animal leaped up and bounded away. Instinctively, Bill threw up his rifle, while Miles yelled, "Look! Look!" but the next instant Bill saw that it was a doe, and when he looked under the treetop, sure enough, there was a

little fawn, all spotted, hiding close to the ground.

Without touching it they walked on, circling around toward the creek again, for Bill didn't want to go far from the boat in the strange country. After a time he saw a large black-shouldered grouse, and shot its head off with the little rifle. A little later, having showed Miles how to aim and how to pull the trigger without jerking it, he had him aim at another grouse standing with head up on a lower spruce-tree branch. Miles leveled the rifle, resting it against a tree, and fired. The bird did not move, and Bill worked the lever and had Miles shoot again, and the third shot saw the first game Miles Breton had ever killed fluttering on the ground.

They found their way to the boat with five partridges, arriving about one o'clock. The motor-boat was there, but the skiff was gone from the davits, and the man did not return that afternoon or that night. The two boys cooked dinner, and for supper they had a partridge pot-pie.

Late in the twilight, after supper, they were sitting on the deck, when Bill heard a twig crack down-stream. Looking, he discovered a deer, and, as it had horns, he took up the

rifle and, aiming carefully, fired. The deer turned and dashed up the bank, but before it was out of sight, down it came, dead.

Turning the cruiser's search-light in that direction, Bill dressed and hung up the deer. Then, having waited till they were pretty sleepy, both went to bed. In the morning they were up soon after daybreak, and after breakfast, finding the captain did not return, they went out and cut up the deer, for, as it was warm weather, they must cure it to keep it.

The meat, except what they wanted for the next two days, they cut up into strips eight inches long and two inches or so square. This meat they packed down on the clean inside of the deer-hide, on a layer of salt. On the meat they sprinkled more salt, put down another meat layer and more salt, till all the meat was corded up in a neat square heap. Then Bill wrapped the hide up tightly and bound it fast. He swung it on a limb out of the way of animals, and returned to the boat, to wait the return of their employer, who came and went so unexpectedly.

"To-morrow we'll jerk it," Bill told Miles. Bill gave Miles some practice with a little twenty-two rifle which they found in the gun

and fish-rod cabinet. They fired ten or twelve shots, and then cleaned the rifle to shoot again. By the time they had fired a hundred BB caps Miles could aim and fire and come within a little way of hitting the leaves on the water or a little nub of a stick up the creek. Closer and closer his bullets approached the mark, for the woods-trained Bill was a good teacher and knew rifle-shooting, and knew what was the matter when the bullets failed to strike home—whether it was flinching, holding too high, pulling the trigger with a jerk, or any of the other things that spoil the aim.

When they were tired of practising with the rifle, Bill showed Miles how to cast a fly; explained the little twitch of the wrist that makes the difference between stretching the line out and letting the flies fall naturally on the water, and twisting the line up in coils and tangles with the leader. The trout were so plenty there that they interfered with the practising-lessons, until Bill broke the point off one of the fly-hooks so that if the trout did jump they would not catch on the hook, or hang on the fly more than a moment.

"It's just like a new world," Miles remarked with awe, as he looked around at the trees,

tossed the rod, and looked at the rifle standing in the hatchway. "These are the things I dreamed about doing—without knowing in the least how they were done."

Bill laughed. Everything was going as Bill had hoped, apparently. Nothing could compare with the outdoor adventure and work which they were having to keep them busy learning and earning, getting a perspective on things in general.

"Wasn't that fine what he said about learning what is going on in the world now, as well as what used to happen?" Bill suggested.

"I've been thinking about that," Miles answered. "But that would mean a new kind of school-books—books that would help a fellow to understand what all those things mean when you read the newspapers. Now you know yourself that when you read a newspaper only just some things mean anything to you. Why, they'd have to have school-books to tell just what politics and reform and tariff and all those things mean, so you could read and know what is going on."

"You know," Bill remarked, thoughtfully, "I believe they have so much about murders and thieves and that sort of thing in newspapers because folks don't understand other

kinds of things when they read about them. Their education has been neglected. I know my folks don't like to have me read newspapers, because there's so much in them that is just a waste of time to read—same old murders, burglaries, bankers robbing banks, only the names being different. That shows it's what you don't learn that makes newspapers have so much of that stuff in them. Captain Jogues is right about that. I'm going to read papers after this."

"So am I," Miles echoed.

As Miles finished speaking, Bill cocked his head to one side, saying, "Listen!"

Listening, they heard the low purring of a motor among the trees down the still water around the bend. Looking, they saw the bow of a maroon-colored boat come around into view, cutting the water with its sharp bow. They did not recognize the boat till they saw the man at the wheel. It was Captain Jogues, and the boat had been painted over from a gray to the dark and beautiful "play-boat" color. Astern towed their own skiff, painted a pale-blue instead of gray.

"Hello, boys!" he greeted, as the boat came to a stop alongside, hardly an inch away, yet

without rubbing, for the captain was a skilful helmsman. "What are you doing?"

"We were just talking about what you said about reading newspapers in schools," Bill explained, lending a hand with the painter and helping the captain up the side.

Captain Jogues came aboard, and the two boys were going to swing the skiff up on the davits, but the captain shook his head.

"Never mind that, boys. You'll want to go get that deer to-night."

"No, we'll not!" Bill grinned. "He's hung up already."

"What!" the man exclaimed, and then chuckled as he turned to go below, continuing: "For greenhorns you're a pretty fair pair of lads."

XIV

JUST PLAIN TOWN BOYS

"FOR greenhorns! I'm no greenhorn," Bill Sayne thought as Captain Jogues disappeared in the cabin. "Why, I've traveled thousands of miles alone! Of course, Miles hasn't been around much. Probably it is Miles who makes us seem so green; but Miles is learning fast."

There was something about Captain Jogues, particularly all this mystery, that disturbed Miles more and more. There was a tone in his voice which suggested the Mississippi River, and, occasionally, there was some river slang. Of course, that might mean much or little. Bill could not make up his mind that he liked the little captain, who was so odd in his appearance and so full of abrupt changes from snappy moods to jovial manners.

Bill had not felt the sting of his tongue so often as Miles had, but it rankled to be called

a greenhorn. He knew the woods as well as books; he had traveled and taken care of himself; now, just when he had killed a deer, surprising the man himself, to be called a greenhorn made Bill feel a little sullen.

After dinner the man told the boys to jump into the skiff with him. Starting down the stream, they wound in and out among the swamp meadows and woods for a mile or more. They flushed a flock of young black ducks and saw another deer, and suddenly turned a bend and came out into a large river. They had gone down this river only a few miles when they caught a glimpse of the wide waters of the lake beyond a bay.

"I thought perhaps you didn't know just where you were," the man explained, calmly, steering back up the stream. "Now you'll just notice that we keep pretty close to the west side; on the east side there are quite a lot of boulders, making mighty fine fly-fishing, but hard on a boat's bottom if you hit 'em going at any speed. If you should ever happen to have to run for it, I want you to remember to hold close in to the west side, and when you come through into that little cove you want to look out for the tree that's fallen across it, except on the north side.

There's just room there to shove the big boat through, and then the alders straighten up."

"I was just wondering how we got by that fallen treetop," Bill remarked.

"Well, notice now. See that sharp rock down there? Now I want to show you something else."

He turned the skiff up the cove past the cruiser, and half a mile beyond headed straight into a tangle of alders on the south.

"Now look where I turned in," the man said. "Right square in line with us is that stub, and beyond it that scale-bark balsam. Now see—"

The nose of the skiff parted the alders ahead, and, passing through, they came into an open waterway, winding in and out among the banks and stones. A quarter of a mile through this water they came into a typical woods lake, but the man did not stop there. He headed down the east shore and ran down the deep-water outlet nearly a mile. Suddenly, ahead of them opened up a cattail marsh, with a little creek running through it, out into the open bay. Right at the foot of the stream, where the water was too deep for cattails to grow, there was a pile of driftwood, apparently barring egress that way.

The man cackled again as Bill and Miles looked over and around it. Putting the bow of the skiff against the mass, on the starboard side, the captain pushed the whole mass to one side, and as the skiff went out into the open waters the drift swung back into place again.

"See that?" the man chuckled. "When you're in the wildcat express business, you've got to fool those big monopolists; if you don't they'll get you every time. Now what I want you kids to do is remember these things you see, and if you ever have to beat it—get away from anybody—this is the way to do it. Just circle up around that island and put out into the open lake again. Don't you ever stop in here. They'd trap you, sure. This run-around is just a little skip-jack place. Don't get caught, whatever you do; lie low, throw 'er wide open, and they'll never catch you. They haven't anything can catch you in that cabin boat. Don't be scared of bullets, either! There's half an inch of steel right around the wheel-pit—"

"What would they shoot for?" Bill asked, looking at the man in astonishment.

"My boy, when you are in business for yourself, if you compete with any of those

great and heartless corporations, you'll find that shooting isn't all they'll do. They use matches and soup—I mean nitro-glycerine; they won't stop at anything!"

"Why—I never heard of anything like that!" Bill gasped.

"If you read the newspapers, and knew enough about things to read between the lines about those explosions and fires and accidents, you would learn a great many things you don't know now."

He said it with solemn face and deep, hollow tones. The light of mockery died out of his eyes. It was no mistake about his having found violence and desperate adventures in his kind of business. Bill felt that he was telling the truth, which he had not always felt before, but Bill had never heard of an express business that was so full of menace and danger that they had to have secret waterways and be ever on the alert for danger. However, Bill Sayne had not been on the Great Lakes very long, and he had not read the newspapers with great care or with complete understanding.

"Well, I'm having a liberal education," Bill remarked.

"That's what you are, sonny," the man

assented, having turned back into the hidden channel. "You've some more lake geography to learn. This is Lake Erie, you know, and you must look up the charts with me to-night. The first good weather we have, I'm going to send you on a route we are establishing between some of these northern and southern towns. I'm going to try you out in thick and rough weather, too!"

"Well, we'll do the best we know how," Bill remarked.

"I know it," the man commented, as they came alongside the cruising boat again. "After supper we'll get out the charts. It's important for you to know those charts of the Great Lakes, especially of Lake Erie, now that you are on this lake."

That night they studied the chart of Lake Erie, and the man called special attention to a little stream on the south side of the lake.

"Now that's Cattaraugus Creek," he explained. "We have established a station there. Off the mouth of that stream there is a lot of dredging for sand going on, off and on, but not in bad weather, so if in a storm we go in there they won't get us. That used to be a great fishing-station, before they had steam and gasolene boats to run nets; now

they run out from Buffalo to put out pounds and seines and gill-nets. The first dull weather, so there won't any one see you, I'm going to try you on that creek—see if you can find it in the dark or fog. That kind of navigation will help you more on one trip than you would learn in ten years of ordinary going. While we're about it, we'll start right out now, with the cruiser, and see if you can go around the way we came to-day in the little skiff!"

No sooner had the little man the idea than he started up. He had the boys cast off the lines, with Bill at the wheel, and Miles at the bow with a long sounding-pole in his hands. Up the still water went the cruiser, through the screen of alders into the hidden channel, bumping past the artificial flood-wood jam out into the open bay. It was all done without a light on board the boat, too, but at slow speed. Of course Bill bumped into first one bank and then the other, and several times he scraped on stones on the bottom.

"When you go slow enough, you're all right," the man advised. "Just go slow enough, that's all. No matter if they are right after you, go slow, so if you do bump you can back off. If they go fast, why they're sure to hit something in here—dead sure!"

From the bay around into the river-mouth, up the river to the partly hidden creek mouth, and back to the landing was easy enough, after the trip through the maze of the hidden channel. Bill and Miles thought it was about the most interesting night they had ever had, all things considered. The man demanded their utmost skill and resourcefulness, that was clear. When they found themselves in a fix, he let them find their way out of it the best they knew or could find out how.

"Enough for one night," the captain said, when after midnight they were tied in again. "To-morrow you'll jerk that venison, and if we have good luck (that sky there looks like thick weather) you shall have some real business to attend to."

In the morning, rather late, for the captain was as erratic in his hours of sleep as in other matters, they had their breakfast, and then all three went down to the hideful of venison. Bill was now master of ceremonies. He cut four forks of saplings, and drove them into the ground in a rectangle, with the forks about two feet above the ground. On the forks he rested four substantial sticks about four feet long. Then they cut some sticks as large around as his thumb, whittled the

bark off, and strung the strips of meat on the peeled sticks so that they hung about an inch apart. Each stickful he swashed around in the water, to wash off the salt, and then hung the meat on the cross-pieces on the forks. Then building a fire of dry spruce kindlings, on which he put green birch and maple, he broiled the meat for nearly four hours—as long as it dripped. A spoonful of water on the wood, when it blazed so high that the flames touched the meat, prevented scorching.

It was nearly one o'clock when the meat stopped dripping and Bill announced:

"There! There's the jerked venison! A stick of that would make a square meal for any one."

"Good!" Captain Jogues smiled. "We'll stow that in tins, and use it when we're in need of a cold lunch."

"It's just like dried beef," Bill said. "You can use it in making meat gravy, or hash, or anything of that sort."

"One could jerk beef that way, too, I suppose?" Captain Jogues remarked, with interest.

"Of course—any kind of meat!"

"I'll remember that," the man remarked. "Sometime if I should want to hide out or

keep under cover awhile, why, that would be a good thing to have along — just the knowledge of how to do that."

"Didn't you know about that way of fixing meat before?" Bill asked, with just a memory of the remark on his being a greenhorn rankling in his words.

"No; I never happened to see it done."

"Live and learn." Bill grinned audaciously, and the man laughed.

"That's so. You aren't green in some ways," he said.

Bill made a wry face. The man wouldn't admit that his knowing the outdoors meant very much, after all. There was a sting in the words "in some ways," as there had been in the original remark about Bill and Miles being greenhorns.

"I'll show him yet!" Bill thought. "When any one can do a thing the right way, like camping out, he isn't a greenhorn."

The man seemed to read his thoughts, for he remarked as they prepared dinner:

"You see, boys, it's just like this: you're just plain town boys; you haven't had much experience, and the ways of the world are pretty mysterious till you've had your eyes opened to them. Now, Bill, here, knows a

lot about some things, but you put him down in the midst of some new ideas and he would be lost. That's why they laugh at those college fellows so much, especially the wise old professors. They know a whole lot about one or two things, maybe more; but when they meet up with some practical business like mine, here, why they'd be lost; they would be helpless as little babies, as Gyp, there, wrestling with a problem in geometrical progression. I guess that's what they call it."

As night came down the sun faded from view in a slow-advancing haze, and the night was dark and calm. Just as the boys were thinking they would have a pleasant night of it sleeping in the snug creek, the man rose from the supper-table.

"Boys," he said, with solemnity, "it's going to be some night, and I think I'll just go across with a cargo—if nothing happens."

With that he ordered them to cast off, and in five minutes they were driving down the creek. When they reached the river the boys were surprised to see there in the gloaming, besides the open launch, a flat-bottomed scow with two men in it. There were also some dozens of packages and several half-barrels.

These the boys helped Captain Jogues load on the newly painted maroon-colored open launch in which he came back to the boys, and when the cargo was all on board Captain Jogues nodded a dismissal as the boys climbed down into the motor-skiff, which they drew alongside by its tow-line.

As the captain took his seat at the steering-wheel of the open launch the two men in their scow started poling along up the bay shore and the boys turned up the creek. As if as an afterthought, before the boys were out of speaking distance Captain Jogues turned and said:

"You'll find another X on the Lake Michigan chart; meet me there in three weeks. Take your time and get there on that date, so you won't be hanging around there any time. Good-by!"

Then he started the motor again, and the launch jerked away, headed toward the open lake, which was now tossing with white-caps. The low roar of a gale was throbbing through the trees along the river-bank. The boys watched him till the launch was lost to view, a mere fleck at the last, out in the rolling waters. Then they turned and looked at each other.

"Did you ever!" Miles exclaimed.

Bill did not smile, but frowned as if some doubt had arisen in his mind which he did not care to explain just then. Without a word he started the skiff motor and steered up the river.

As they rounded the first bend they had a surprise. There were two men clearing a little knoll, and on the ground were two tents ready to be put up; and drawn up on the beach was a beautiful new canoe, all green and red. On the beach were four packs and other camping paraphernalia. The men were working rapidly, hurrying to get their camp made before the wind brought rain.

Evidently they were sportsmen seeking trout. Bill and Miles were going on up the river when suddenly the men stopped their camp-making and turned to stare at them in surprise as great as their own had been. The tall, rather slender, smooth-faced man recovered himself first.

"Hello, boys!" he shouted. "How are you?"

The boys landed near the canoe, and the men came down to greet them.

"Staying around here?" the darker, shorter, older man asked, and Bill noticed that the

slender one gave him a quick warning glance. Instantly Bill was on his guard. Miles, too, felt suspicious, and left the talking to Bill. No doubt, these men were spying on Captain Jogues and were following him far and wide, to prevent his engaging in business in opposition to monopolies whose heartless and relentless pursuit of competitors Bill began to feel was unimaginably real.

"Not long," Bill answered, easily. "We're on our way along the shore, up and down; I see you're traveling too."

It seemed to Bill like a poor place to camp, for the wind was swirling down out of the open over the river and sweeping under the trees. His eyes glanced over the duffle, wondering why it should be so new, when suddenly the coat of the smaller man blew back and Bill saw a badge. As the man jerked the coat back Bill's eye retained the impression of "U. S. Customs" on the top of the little shield. The thing dazed him for an instant, and he heard but faintly what one of the men remarked about there being good fishing all along the shore there.

The splash of a first drop of rain from the darkening sky gave Bill an opportunity to get away from the men and go back to the

cruising launch, his heart thumping uncomfortably as his doubts gave way rapidly to a certainty that alarmed and startled him.

"We'll be wet if we don't get out of this!" Bill exclaimed to Miles, and without more ado the two boarded the motor-skiff and shoved out into the river. As they cleared the shallow, Bill started the engine and the skiff headed up the stream.

Glancing back, Bill glimpsed an interchange of glances between the two men as they turned to their tent, carrying in the four bundles of duffle. When they came to the mouth of the creek Bill kept right on up the river, while Miles turned to utter an interrogatory exclamation.

"'Sh-h!" Bill whispered, sharply. "I begin to see what is up now. Those men 'll follow us! We've got to dodge them somehow."

Nearly half a mile above the creek, Bill turned the boat sharply into the mouth of another brook and stopped it a hundred yards back in the alder-bed there.

"Wait here, Miles!" Bill commanded, as he jumped ashore and ran into the woods back toward the river-bank. There he crouched in the brush, and, sure enough, the beautiful canoe came around the river bend and drove

on up the river with long strokes of the paddle. The men came in on the near shore and crossed over to the opposite side, where the bend of the river was around to the right. There they peered up-stream, and then swung around out of sight. The little skiff of the boys had been too swift for them, and had outrun them.

Bill hurried back to the skiff, cast off the line and backed the boat down to the river, for the brook was too narrow to turn around in. He paused to look up-stream, but the men were out of sight. With that, Bill went out into the river and headed down-stream at full speed, while Miles watched him, wondering what important thing was developing, and realizing that this was no time for questions.

Bill steered into the creek and made straight for the gasolene-cruiser, and as he approached it he told Miles in a low voice what he had seen.

"We've got to get out of this!" he said. "Those men are officers, and they're watching us for some of Captain Jogues's business. I don't know what, but we've got to go. Cast off! Keep still, Gyp! Down, sir!"

Gyp felt the excitement and started to whine, ready to bark, but Bill's sharp com-

mand silenced him, while Miles sprang to the stern mooring-line to cast off. Bill tended the bow-line, and they swung the motor-skiff up onto the cabin of the cruiser by the davits, beside their own skiff, which was already there, upside down and lashed fast.

"Make everything fast, Miles," Bill said. "We've our work cut out for us to-night!"

Miles coiled up the ropes and tied them down with marlin. He worked rapidly, slinging down the motor-skiff, and making the canvas boat tarpaulin fast and taut by its lashing-lines, while Bill took the wheel, threw over the self-starter, and headed the cruiser up the still water.

Soon all was secure and snug, so that if the boat rolled everything would be tight and nothing could wash overboard. Miles, in his slickers, went to the bow in the rain, and in the gathering gloom of night helped Bill pick the channel. They came to the hidden channel and turned down into it, and crept through its tortuous course and neared the bay behind the screen of the drift pile in the reedy marsh.

It was late twilight when they came to the marsh, and as night fell they pressed by the floating jam and shot out into the bay at the mouth of the creek. Ahead of them was the

open lake. As they came clear of the land the boat began to rock and roll, and the wind came soughing and whining out of the west, pounding the cabin and wheel-house with sheeting rain, making a loud and ominous sound.

"It 'll be rough outside!" Bill exclaimed, with a strange fluttering of the heart. "It 'll try our grit to-night. But it's less dangerous outside than ashore, or I wouldn't risk it!"

"What *is* the matter?" Miles asked.

"Those men—they're customs officials, and they're following us. Do you know what I think? I believe Captain Jogues is a smuggler!"

"What!" gasped Miles. "Then we've—"

Neither boy spoke while they crossed the bay. They did not know what might happen or what could happen. On them was suddenly thrust the realization that they were fugitives; but just why they did not understand. However, ahead of them was the storm raging on the lake which they must undertake rather than remain at close quarters with those two men whose intentions and business they could only guess at with alarm and doubt.

XV

THE CACHE OF GASOLENE

WHEN they were clear of the bay and out in the full sweep of the wind, they found themselves in a choppy sea. The wind roared over the water, and the waves hissed as they broke. The sky was dark and gloomy. The compass, swinging with the pitching of the boat as it ran quartering before the wind on the course to Cattaraugus Creek, seemed inadequate to keep their course true on such a night in such a gale.

Moreover, Bill realized that the drift of the wind would carry them far out on the lake if he did not make allowance for it—but how much allowance? He could not tell. He wondered what Captain Jogues would do, and whether the storm was really dangerous?

But Bill said nothing to Miles, who sat beside him, holding fast to the seat which had been fixed across the rear of the low pilot-house.

"How are you going to know the creek when you see it?" Miles shouted. "Have you ever been there?"

"No; but he said there were big sand-dredges there. They've dug out the sand and made a kind of a little harbor there, so we can run up the creek."

"This wind 'll blow us away out of our course!"

"I'm making allowance for that," Bill answered, turning the engine up almost to full speed. "One good thing, it isn't very far across—not more than thirty miles, and this boat will make that in an hour and a half."

After a while Miles asked again:

"Aren't we apt to run ashore before we know it?"

"Well, going at this rate, we'll land high and dry if we do!" Bill shouted back, and then he threw the wheel over, because a wave beating into the stern of the boat swung it clear around broadside to the sea. Happily it was a fast boat, and before another wave could follow up and come down on the little craft in the trough of the sea, it had swung around again into its course.

"There's a light!" Miles shouted, as they topped a wave.

Sure enough, a light had flashed ahead of them, and then they saw a red light under the white one.

"It's a ship," Bill called out, "going down the lake! The red light's on the port side! We'll pass under her stern!"

Sure enough, a few minutes later they shot under the steamer's stern, hardly two hundred yards from it. Beyond the steamer the darkness seemed more intense than ever. Bill hooded the compass so that he could not see even its faintest glimmer, for he could tell the course by the wind and by the direction of the running waves. He was staring ahead, when suddenly there flared up a vast billow of light on rolling clouds. The next instant he recognized it.

"They're firing a locomotive!" he shouted, slowing the engine down and looking into the darkness ahead. A moment later he saw the land, hardly half a mile ahead. "I wonder where that is?"

"He said the railroad comes close to the water at Silver Creek. The way you've been steering we must have come across there, somewhere," Miles suggested.

"We're west of Cattaraugus somewhere. Well, we'll coast down that way—east, any-

how, or a little more than east. The waves catch us on the other side now. Keep your eyes open along shore!"

Twenty minutes later, as they searched the gloom along the shore for an opening they spied a dark streak in the white line of breakers.

"There's some kind of a little harbor!" Bill shouted. "I'm going to look into it."

He held toward the dark patch which was now dead ahead, and drove in straight before the wind. There was a sudden black tumult of waves under them, and then the motor-boat plunged ahead into a quiet lee shelter where the wind came in light gusts over the land.

On their right they discovered a dark mass, with long arms reaching out, which Miles recognized as the sand-dredge.

"We've hit a plumb center!" Bill cried, enthusiastically. "Now for the creek—up in that brush somewhere."

Following the shore slowly, he turned in at an opening in the brush, sending Miles to the reverse gear in case the boat should bump into anything. It was the creek, however, and Bill and Miles drove up the stream. There appeared to be a lull in the storm, for the wind did not strike down so heavily.

After a little they came to a thicket, where they made fast to some willows. They were now entirely out of the wind and waves, although they could hear, far away, the roar of the lake upon the beach.

The boys went below, and, pulling the shades closely over the ports, they turned on the lights and sat in the bright cabin, listening to the gusts of rain beating upon the deck.

They were silent and tired after the hard run on the lake through the gale. They could hardly speak for a long time, and then their attempted remarks were disjointed, for they could not collect their wits for coherent discussion of what they were trying to help each other understand.

"I can't make head or tail of it," Miles muttered.

"I can't—or what we're up to—or anything. He said 'Go to X.'"

"It's his boat—and those revenue men—they—

"We'd better leave this job!"

"So I think; but the boat—we must give that back—"

"And those men 'll follow us all over. We didn't do anything—"

"We took that stuff across—"

"But we didn't; he said express business—"

"I'm all mixed up!"

"So am I. Let's go to bed."

They turned out the lights, and tried to sleep, but the excitement of their discovery and of the trip across remained with the boys, and, in spite of their great fatigue, for a long time they could not sleep. On the deck pounded and spattered the downpour of the rain, but finally the boys lost consciousness.

When they awoke late in the morning it was to a day of wind and pouring rain. After a look at the sky Bill remarked that it was too rough to go on the lake and they might as well spend the day reading and dozing.

There were a few books and old magazines on the boat, and these they tried to read, but again and again they went over plans and discussed the phases of their predicament. Here they were pursued by revenue officers, working, without knowing it, for a smuggler who would probably be desperate and dangerous if they left him. They could not leave him without returning the cruising motor-boat to him, and they did not know where to find him in less than three weeks.

They wondered more and more what their

own status was and what they had done. They wondered about their trip up the Lakes to the shore of Lake Michigan, where they found "X" drawn on the map in ink. With these clouds of doubt hanging over them, it was hard to decide what to do. They tried fishing over the side of the boat, but there were no trout in the sluggish, muddy-bottomed creek. They sank a piece of meat to the bottom, and caught bullheads, ugly fish with sharp-spined fins, but delicious when fried in lard after being rolled in corn-meal.

The storm lasted three days and then blew itself out as the sun went down on the third day. On the fourth morning Bill was awakened by the sun shining on his face through an open port. It was a little after four o'clock when they prepared for the day by eating a good breakfast of fish and pancakes.

"Now what?" Miles asked.

"Well, we've got to get out of here before the dredgers come, and we're almost out of gasolene. There's hardly any in the tank."

"You remember Captain Jogues said something about having gasolene hidden somewhere north of that still water—"

"That's just what I've been thinking. He said, 'Don't tap the cruiser's tank if you need

gasolene for the motor-skiff; you'll find a dozen or more five-gallon cans full due north from the big balsam on the rock just below where we killed the deer—up that runway there'—"

"Yes, I remember that; but those revenue officers."

"Well, we'll have to chance them. They probably went away when they found we'd skipped out, but they may not be far away. Probably they suspect us, but it's Canada, and they can't touch us, even if they wish to. Perhaps they'll be looking for us on this side. Let's get out of here! I—I don't know what to do! I wish the captain had his plaguey boat! I've about all I want of this kind of a business. Let's cast off and head away."

"Aye!" Miles answered, as nautically as he knew how, and they unmoored, pushed out from the bank, and as the current swung the bow of the boat around Bill took the wheel and started the engine. They drove down the creek, and in a few minutes they were nodding to the rollers which were surging into the creek. With Gyp barking his delight, they swaggered through the surf out into the heaving open waters and steered away for the North Shore again.

It was only a little more than a two hours'

run across the lake; but long before the boys reached the North Shore they slowed down doubtfully. After all, they were not so sure the secret-service men were gone, and they feared to meet them. The tank did not contain enough for more than two hours' run, at most, and they must get to the hidden gasolene to supply themselves for the run up to Lake Michigan, where they would return the cruiser to the captain and get away from their too-questionable employment as motor-boat sailors in the employ of the man whom they now felt sure was a smuggler.

"We'd better head in ten or twelve miles above the bay, and then come down at night," Bill decided, and accordingly they steered up the lake. When they came to the shore, it was into a little cluster of islands, where they waited impatiently for night to come. It was a wild shore, with fish jumping among the rocks and along the ledge that marked one of the islands. They caught some bass while waiting for the coming of night; but they had little appetite for supper.

After sundown they hauled in their anchor and once more headed down the lake shore at half-speed, and near midnight rounded the

familiar point, and inside they saw the dark bay.

"Now we'll have to leave the cruiser here," Bill whispered. "And we'll swing the motor-skiff over and go in that."

They swung the skiff down into the water, and, leaving Gyp on the cruiser, they headed around the bay shore toward the marsh, very glad that the motor made little noise. They reached the marsh without incident, and, shoving past the floating drift-pile, they worked their way through the blind channel into the still water and down it until they came to the bank where they had found mooring before. Just below they came to the balsam-tree that marked the deer run-way which they must follow back in their search for the gasolene cache.

They drew the boat half up on the bog, and then walked into the woods, which was easy enough to do, and once back in the brush Bill turned on his electric flash, and they hurried up the slope of the ridge two hundred yards back.

Suddenly they came to a huge boulder, left there by the ice sheet which in the ice age swept down over the continent.

"It's around here somewhere," Bill whis-

pered. "He told about the big rock. Now we'll go around this rock, and if we don't find it we'll circle around."

There was no gasolene around the rock; but Bill was woods trained, and he made a circle around the rock two rods from it, and then another circle four rods from it, and a third circle took them into a dense clump of spruce saplings, the largest of which was hardly an inch in diameter.

"I guess it's in this," Bill said, stooping low to shoot the flash underneath the branches. "I thought so!" he exclaimed, gladly. "See that glisten!"

Miles had seen something shine. A few seconds later they were standing beside a pile of five-gallon cans, full of gasolene they had not a doubt.

"We can take twelve of them into the skiff," Bill whispered, for the excitement made him lower his voice. "That means three trips to the skiff, and two trips to the cruiser."

The pile was covered with a black tarpaulin, which came half-way down the side, and the boys merely took out the cans without raising the canvas, holding their flashes in their teeth. They carried down ten gal-

lons each and returned for another load, and when they had the third load on board the skiff was deeply laden.

"I'd better stay behind and carry down the cans," Miles suggested.

"Good boy!" Bill exclaimed. "Be careful you don't get off the track. If you do, just sit right down and wait till I come back, and I'll call. Then you'll hear me, and you'll be all right. If you try to find yourself, probably you'll get farther and farther away, and if you got a mile away I might never find you. Don't forget, due south leads you to the lake shore. It's easy to be turned around in woods as thick as these."

"All right," Miles answered; and after helping Bill shove the skiff off, he turned back on the trail to the cache.

With that Bill started the motor and headed up the still water toward the blind channel, wasting no time in getting the boat-load on its way. Miles had no trouble in going to the cache, for the runway was plainly visible under the light of his flash, and a few minutes later he returned with the first load of two cans. Then he went back after another load, which he brought down, and before long he had made six trips. Then he brought down

two more cans for good measure. He found one can at the cache which was more than half empty, having leaked, and there were only ten cans left after he had brought down the eighty gallons.

"We could stow that on board," Miles thought. "We might as well take it all, making another trip with the skiff!"

Then he sat down to wait for Bill's return. The time had gone rapidly enough while he was working, but now that he was merely waiting it went very slowly indeed. Moreover, as he sat there in the wilderness dark he could hear the night-stalkers going about their business. He heard an owl far away, and the rustle of branches near by. There was a loud splash in the still water, and the crackling of a twig behind him up the trail. Then, after an interval of absolute silence, came a twisting, rending, crashing which grew louder and louder. It sounded as if all the woods were being crushed. Then there was a long swishing downfall, followed by uprushing of branches and the clattering of sticks and a rain of twigs. Little by little, the sound of splitting timber died away, and in the silence that ensued Miles knew that he had listened to the fall of a dead tree.

Hardly had he caught his breath after that awesome sound than down the still water came the skiff, splitting the gleaming surface. It turned in and came softly to the bank, and in a moment Bill was handing in the cans of gasolene.

Miles told Bill what he had heard, and asked if he, too, had heard the fall of the tree.

"No," Bill answered; "those sounds don't carry far in the woods, for the trunks, the twigs, and the leaves deaden the sound—cut up the sound-waves—but I know what they are. Everywhere you go in the wilds you'll hear things like that out in the timber, especially at night."

So they talked while they loaded the boat with the gasolene, and when at last the cargo was all aboard they gave a look around to make certain that they were all ready.

"Come on!" Bill then said. "They 're there yet. I saw their fire."

"There 're only ten cans more at the cache; we could take that in the after-cabin," Miles suggested.

"Is that all? It's early yet," Bill said, reluctantly. "We may need it, too. I don't believe they know we're within a hundred miles, but perhaps we'd better get away—"

"It won't take an hour; it's only a little after one o'clock now," Miles urged, his native thrift rebelling against abandoning the gasolene. "They'll find it by our tracks—"

"That's so, they would. Well, all right; get it down here."

Once more Miles returned to the cache and Bill to the cruiser. Bill made his way through the blind channel and across the bay to the cruiser, and after unloading the skiff he turned and started back. As he approached the marsh his eyes turned along the bay shore toward the mouth of the river where the men had their camp. When he saw the firelight of the revenue men, he also saw between him and the camp a canoe with two men in it, paddling with all their might along the shore. At the rate they were going Bill knew they would reach the marsh as soon as he would, and with a gasp of dismay he put the tiller hard over and swung out into the bay again, wishing with all his heart and mind that he had not been tempted to save that last fifty gallons of gasolene!

XVI

DREAMS OF OLD DETROIT

MILES carried the gasolene down the trail to the bank of the still water, and sat down to wait for Bill's return a long time before he heard anything, and then it was voices—the low voices of two men of whose identity he was soon aware—the two who had camped down the creek at the mouth of the river. They were coming from up the still water, and he could hear the dip of their paddles as they came.

Instantly Miles slipped from the log on which he was sitting and flattened himself out on the moss, regardless of the water. Happily, he thought, there were many low shrubs there, and the gasolene-cans were standing off the runway.

The voices came nearer and nearer, and then the paddles stopped dipping, but in the silence Miles could hear the prow cutting softly through the surface.

"Funny we didn't notice that floating drift," one of the men muttered, distinctly.

"That's so—just the kind of place to scout from. Wonder if this isn't that creek up the river?"

"By George! Say, this is where they had that cruiser hidden—"

"But how did they get down the river?"

"They didn't, they came through that driftwood—"

"With a boat as large as that?"

"Sure! We could have pushed it out to make a place twelve or fifteen feet wide."

"That's right, but I think they've probably gone up instead of down this way. We'd better go back up and explore this still water above here—don't you think?"

"All right—"

Their paddles dipped, and the canoe turned around and swung up the still water again, and when they were out of hearing Miles sat up, trembling with uncertainty.

"They'll meet Bill!" he whispered to himself! "They'll meet him! What 'll I do?"

And then, as if in answer, from the shadow down the still water came a low whisper:

"Miles, Miles, is that you?"

"Bill!" gasped Miles.

"Sure! Step aboard. Seen 'em?"

"They're up the still water," Miles answered.

"All right."

The bow of the boat came in to the bank, and Miles lifted a can into it. Bill caught his breath, and Miles heard him utter a sound almost like a chuckle.

"Sure we'll take what we came for," Bill whispered; and the two hurriedly passed the cans into the skiff till they reached the last one. Just as Miles reached to hand it to Bill, the rusty handle suddenly gave way, and down the can came on the other cans, making a "tump" like the drum signals of Africa. The sound boomed out through the woods and echoed from the ridge and rumbled along the still water.

"Hurry! Aboard there!" Bill exclaimed. "Shove off!"

Miles shoved off and Bill started the motor. The boat jumped ahead and away they went down the still water, but before they had more than started, looking behind them, Bill saw a flash of light up the still water, and a beam came darting down the bank searching for them. It was an electric lamp with a distance lens on it. The motor-skiff darted

around a turn just as the light struck across the dancing and rippling waters. Bill opened up the motor to full speed, and then the engine began to skip.

"Oh, oh!" Miles cried. "They always fail when you need them!"

Bill uttered a low groan of anguish as the skipping became more and more pronounced.

"Miles, Miles," he cried, "pour some gasolene in the tank! We haven't filled it in a long time!"

Miles snatched up one of the cans, pulled the heavy cork from the hole, and then with trembling fingers he opened the tank and put in the funnel. Behind him the motor choked and sputtered and plugged. The next instant the welcome sound of gurgling and running gasolene in the funnel began. It sucked down into the tank, and then the motor suddenly sputtered and thumped. It thumped three or four times, and then with a few low bumps it picked up its speed and turned over with an increasing whir and flutter.

"That was it! The gasolene!" Bill whispered, jubilantly.

At that minute the boat bumped solidly into a log, and then crashed, as it rose, into

the mass of brush in the foot of the still water which screened the creek from the passer-by.

"Oh!" the boys cried together.

"Jump your foot on the log and back up!" Bill cried, reversing the propeller; and Miles, with the strength of despair, pushed the boat back and clear, and jumped into it again. Behind them they saw the beam of light on the alders, showing that the canoe was coming behind them toward the last turn.

"Your flash!" Bill exclaimed; and Miles pointed it at the brush. There was the way through, which they had missed by a yard. The boat ran into it, shoved through the alder brush along the bank, and then they came out into the open river, where the current turned them down-stream.

"Away we go!" Bill exclaimed, and threw out the muffler, while the woods echoed with the barking of the motor. The boys did not care. They soon passed the camp on the river-point, and there they silenced the motor again and headed out across the bay toward the cruiser, which was anchored under the point opposite them. Quite breathless and weak with excitement, they raised the cruiser and ran alongside. Miles swung up onto the

deck, the painter in hand, and Bill followed. While Miles tied the tow-line aft Bill ran to the anchor, and Gyp pranced forward with him, glad to have his master back again.

In half a minute the anchor was on board, and Bill started the motor, put the wheel hard down, and headed out into the lake clear of the land. Then for hours the boys sat side by side in the little wheel-house, not speaking at all, Bill steering westward by the North Star, and when, after sunrise, they saw a long, wooded landfall ahead of them, they knew that at last they were clear, for the present, at least, of the unwelcome attentions of the two men, one of whom wore a United States customs badge.

They had their chart open before them, and from time to time they looked at it in the light of their flashes. When day came they swung steadily on. Miles turned in for two hours, and then he took the wheel and held the course while Bill slept, and thus they made the length of Lake Erie, passing Long Point and then Point Pelee, over the long shoal on their way to the Detroit River, up which they must go to Lake Michigan to rid themselves of the gasolene-cruiser which was

not theirs, but the property of the man whom they had come to know as a smuggler.

They were tired out that night when they came in sight of the long line of lights which marks the channel for steamers through the great shoal at the mouth of the Detroit River.

"We can't stand this without more sleep. A good rest!" Bill exclaimed. "We'd better run in somewhere and have a good sleep."

Miles was glad to acquiesce, and, accordingly, they picked out a little lake near the mouth of the river. They coasted along the shore in the gloom, and, by taking the range of the lights marking the channel, found the bay, which was surrounded by marsh. They worked their way up into the safe channel of the creek, and there anchored in the mud.

Bill hung a light on the short mast for an anchor light, and they turned in for the night. Morning found them still sleeping, dead tired with the long strain of the run up the lake. After breakfast they talked matters over.

"I wish we were rid of it," Miles exclaimed.

"So do I!" Bill answered. "I don't like this dodging and sneaking around. We'll take this boat to X, and when we've turned it over to that man we'll pull right out and go

about our business. We might as well pull right on out now—"

"They'll see us going up the river," Miles suggested, apprehensively.

"I hadn't thought of that," Bill commented, slowly. "Well, we'll go up through at night—and get there as soon as we can."

"But he said in three weeks," Miles suggested. "Will it take that long to go through?"

"I don't know; after we get up there we'll see—part way up, anyhow."

They fidgeted around on the boat all day, but they couldn't sit out on the deck, because of the marsh mosquitoes, and in the cabin it was hot and uncomfortable. To the westward they could see low thunder-head clouds late in the afternoon, and when they started out at sunset they could see the clouds bulging up along the horizon.

"It looks like a storm," Bill commented, "but it 'll be all right going up through the river."

"It 'll be cooler, too, and blow away those mosquitoes," Miles remarked with some intensity. "It feels better out here on the open water driving along this way. I believe it's cooler for that storm already."

"I think so, too," Bill said, giving the wheel a sailor-like half-turn as he steered his course toward the ship-channel off Bar Point. "Better light the side and mast lights, Miles."

Miles did as was suggested.

Rounding into the ship-channel, they entered the Detroit River, whose rows of lights extended ahead of them on either side. They met a great steamer coming down in the night, and their lights caused the steamer to whistle that she would pass to port, and Bill blew the cruiser whistle in assent. This seemed like real navigation, and Bill and Miles both thrilled with the novelty and excitement of driving up this highway of the waters.

Ahead of them glowed the lights of Detroit, reflected against the sky, and when they rounded the long turn into full view of the water-front, the longshore lights were dazzling. Before them opened the harbor activity of tugs, launches, ferry-boats, and what not.

"They're awfully thick," Miles commented, looking at the scene ahead of them. "Lights coming and going everywhere!"

"Well, we'll just go straight up, just off the shore. Most of them are over on the city side," Bill remarked. "Above there is the

lake—Lake St. Clair. Probably there won't be so many boats on the lake."

Sure enough, as they approached the city the lights seemed to recede, and when they came abreast of the city's wharves they found that all but two or three of the boats were away to the westward. One great steamer came past them only a few rods distant, shutting out their view of the city like a great shadow cast against the water-front. Moving slowly, a mass of gloom, the high steamer made one of the most impressive spectacles they had seen. Around the boys the dark waves rose and fell as their boat plunged and rolled along, heading steadily up-stream. The boys could feel that there was a current around, although they could not see it. The movement of the boat, the lift to the waves, and the throb of the motor were all different in the river from what they had been on the currentless lake, but what the difference was neither of the boys could think.

They passed the center of the city, and the number of the lights grew less, and soon they were scattered. There were only a few houses instead of the solid blocks of high stone and metal buildings. They saw a light shining through shimmering leaves, and then they saw

a little line of lights rocking along across the open country, past houses and through clumps of trees.

"It's a trolley-car!" exclaimed Miles, whose eyes had been taking in the coming and passing of the city. The trolley-car seemed the last of the city, and once more they were out in an open lake, and the bright lights gave way to the glow and flaring of the city on the sky overhead. The glow receded behind them little by little, while ahead they picked up the channel buoy-lights, one by one.

They steered to the eastward of the channel, for there was plenty of water for their launch. There was less likelihood of trouble with any of the great fleet of steamers which were constantly moving up and down the channel-way.

The clouds in the west flared and flashed, until little by little they faded, and disappeared entirely as the storm passed on in another direction.

The boys were tired and nervous, and as they approached the north shore of Lake St. Clair Miles suddenly spoke up.

"Let's run in somewhere and rest. It just seems as though I couldn't keep going any longer!"

"That's the way I feel," Bill admitted.

"I don't know what kind of landing we'll make; but let's look at the charts!"

They stopped the motor and took out the St. Clair River chart, and by the cabin lights examined it.

"It's a good thing we didn't try to run in. Look at those soundings! One foot—two feet—half a foot— Gracious! Why, that's just a flat!" Bill commented. "Wonder where we'll go. We draw thirty inches or more. Let's see. There's Bassett Channel. I guess we'll have to try to go in there. It's shallow. We won't go very fast, and you take that boat-hook and sound from the bow."

"Why not run up the ship-channel and come down from the upper end through Bassett Channel? There's plenty of water."

"That's so!" Bill exclaimed. "Then we won't run aground on all that mud. I don't think we could find our way across those flats with this boat, and at night."

So they turned off the cabin lights and went to the wheel. As soon as their eyes were accustomed to the dark again Bill uttered an exclamation:

"Why, what's happened?" he gasped.

"Where are we?" Miles asked.

As they looked around them they saw

everything changed, as it seemed. The glow of Detroit was ahead of them; the channel light was on the other side of them, and not till they looked at the stars and compass could they believe their senses or understand what had happened.

"Oh, I see!" Bill exclaimed. "The little breeze just turned the boat around; but it made things look very different."

When he started the motor and put the wheel hard over and turned the bow toward the channel buoys, the directions once more righted themselves and the boys were able to pick their course.

In a few minutes they ran across the end of the St. Clair Flats canal-bank and turned up into the east channel, with the lower light on their port side. When they passed the upper light, utterly unexpectedly, a strange scene appeared before them. All along the west side, extending for miles, were lights and buildings, as if there was a city there. As they drove up the river these lights flickered and flashed behind trees and through trees, and danced across the water in their reflections. There were launches running up and down, and one huge steamer coming down with stately motion passed them on the port

side, and left a wash of rollers to toss them up and down after the steamer had faded in the gloom down toward the canal.

"It's a regular Venice," Bill said, as he saw the reflection of water beyond the houses. They passed the open mouth of a little canal, beside which were two lights, as if it were a little street of water.

An hour later they were above the settlement along the channel, and opposite a light they swung around to the starboard and went two miles or more down an unlighted waterway. Turning on the search-light on the wheelhouse, they found a small creek or cove among the tall reeds, and ran into it for the night.

Then they looked at the chart to find the meaning of the many riverside buildings along the channel. The names along the watercourse showed clearly the character of the place. There were "The Old Club," "Arthur," "Rushmere," "Star Island," "Marbury," "Joe Bedore," and at the head of Bassett Channel "Old Canada Club."

"Why, it's a fishing and hunting resort," Bill decided. "That's the kind of names they have at such places, of course. I remember now, this is a great duck-hunting marsh. I've read about it. Hunters come

here from all over the world, shooting ducks. I've read about it somewhere—probably in some hunting and fishing paper sometime down home. That's what it is—just a hunting and fishing and summer resort."

Having made up their minds about the curious little settlement which had grown up in the marsh, the boys once more considered their tired heads and turned in. Having taken a look at their anchor to make sure that they could not drift away, they put out their lights and went to sleep.

Then Bill began to dream. It was about Detroit; but not of the Detroit that he had seen that night. It was the old school-history Detroit. It was all woods there, as he saw it in his dream, except for a little clearing with a log cabin in it. In front of the cabin, standing beside a log which had been dragged in for firewood, stood a man who was dressed in deerskin garments and a fur cap. He had an ax with a long, straight handle and a pick on one side.

Evidently the man had been cutting off a length to put into the stick-and-mud fireplace; but now there were voices—a song—coming from over the water. As the man looked, and Bill thought he was looking, too, a canoe

came around the woods and into view. In the canoe were two smooth-shaven young men with dark eyes and smiling faces. By their sides were old-time flint-lock guns; flasks for powder and a buckskin bag for shot were swung over their shoulders by rawhide loops. Each in his girdle wore a short-handled ax—a tomahawk—and a great knife in a sheath.

"Ahoy, Troit!" one of the men shouted. "Ah, but we have come a spell."

"What! You alone—you two?"

"Why not?" the two answered, laughing.

"But the Iroquois?"

"We saw but one party—five of them—and they did not see us. But you live here alone, old man? Why should we fear if you—"

"Tut-tut!" the man answered. "You know that I am a trader and do not meddle with the wars."

"Except to sell all comers powder and shot!"

"And rum!"

"Du Troit's—everybody stops here," the man answered, proudly. "This is my place. Only yesterday I sent on their way some Rice-Eaters, and here you come! Frenchmen and Indians—two thousand miles back—"

"And Dutchmen, I suppose?" asked one of the young men.

"From Corlears—yes. Scouting, and little satisfaction they had from me! I tell you it is time we drove them back down the Mohawk. They say they are already trading on the Lower Lake."

"Yes; such enterprise! They have reached the Lower Lake, and the English have been looking for a river emptying into the big bay down around Virginia; so a pirate reported at Montreal when he came to spend some good Spanish money."

"And you're going?"

"Just running around. We heard some Indians up here had some copper. We came to see."

"So? Well, look!" The settler entered the cabin. "Come in, boys!" he called, and then poured down on the table the contents of a thick skin bag. "Here is the copper you heard about; I thought it was gold, but it is too red for that."

As they crowded around the table Bill found himself jostled and pummeled, and he awakened. It was dark, and it was with difficulty that Bill was able to remember where he was. After a time, when awake enough, he

found that the jostling was merely Gyp bumping against him in wandering over his bunk to get down onto the floor.

Soon Bill was asleep again, tired out, so tired that he was filled with dreams, for no sooner was he asleep than he saw the place again—and he knew it was Detroit, but not the Detroit that he had seen that day, nor that of his previous dream.

The clearing was now large and the timberland was thrust far back. On a kind of knoll was a great stockade, with log cabins of great height at the corners, and around the entrance were a crowd of Indians and white men. Most of the Indians carried bows and quivers full of arrows feathered with beautiful wildfowl quills. The white men carried firearms of various patterns, some of them heavily ornamented with silver. There were Indian women and children. On the ground were bundles of furs—otter, beaver, mink, marten, fisher, and other skins that Bill recognized. They had been packed in by the Indians, and there were some Indians carrying similar bales up from the water-front and dropping them near the other bales.

As Bill wandered among them he saw that the white men were trading with the Indians—

powder, bullets, hatchets, knives, beads, cloth, paints, and kegs of rum for furs. He saw the Indian women coaxing the Indian men to give up their weapons—their tomahawks, knives, spears, and bows—before going through the narrow gate to trade with the white men. He did not understand why the women should take the weapons away, running to hide them in the woods, till he saw the red men coming out of the stockade with their kegs of liquor and saw them stumbling and staggering, and after a while fighting and tumbling around with men of their own race, shouting for their friends and relatives to bring their implements of war with which to kill their enemies who now encompassed them. It was a terrible sight, and Bill was glad when the warriors at last succumbed to the blight of the rum and the women came to drag them away into the brush, where there were little wigwams and camps.

Bill did not awaken till he saw a terribly painted warrior, aflame with rum, come creeping toward him, his bare hands twisting and writhing to rend him. Just as the man seized Bill by the hair he awakened with a yell; but it was only Gyp nuzzling him. Bill had to explain to Miles what was the matter, and

they talked with much interest of this picture of the days just before King Pontiac's War in 1760, and again turned in to sleep. Even then Bill's dreamland imagination was not satisfied, and no sooner was he asleep than he dreamed again, this time of war.

He saw in his dream a worn and harried Indian chief, whom he recognized as Pontiac, hunted by his own people because they were disappointed in his lack of success and angry because of the war he had led them into. But, like moving pictures, the scene quickly changed. The old-time Indian was blotted out by a fort manned by an army of soldiers, with cannon and a great flag on the tallest, slenderest pine pole that Bill had ever seen. But it was still Detroit. Near by were many houses, most of them log cabins, but Bill could see them only indistinctly. The fort was clear before his eyes, and the soldiers in it were all eager and waiting with tense expectation, as they looked out across the open and saw gathering there another army, under bright flags—the red battle-flags of England.

"We'll fight!" somebody shouted, and a great cheer went up in the fort.

Then Bill saw a man in gorgeous uniform, whose face was pale and whose eyes were

blinking. This man kept looking over his shoulder, as if some one were coming at him from behind, but Bill could not see any one. Slowly this man developed, and Bill recognized in him the general who was in command of the American fort that was filled with fighting-men.

As Bill looked at him he began to feel sorry for the man. He showed more and more that he was frightened, that he feared battle, that he was sick with terror. It seemed a sad and pitiful thing to see a man frightened, and Bill was not surprised to see him suddenly send for some soldiers and order them to take a message out of the fort. The soldiers protested, but he snarled at them, and told them they must go or—

The soldiers did not know what to do, for he was in command. If they did not do as he bid he could have them shot. Rather than run the risk of being shot by their own comrades the soldiers sent out a flag of truce; but none of the soldiers in the fort knew what they were doing till the flag was away out toward that hostile invading army.

Then Bill heard cheering far away, and heard yells and shouts and curses around him, and, looking around, he saw that the flag

on the unimaginably tall pine pole was coming down, fluttering, while some grinning men, with red uniforms on, stood around waiting for the halyards to be clear, so that they could hoist their own flag, which was the flag of England.

Bill found his heart pounding and his lungs gasping for air at that spectacle; but before he could tear his way through the crowd to the ropes, he found himself stumbling and bumping around and Miles calling to him:

"What on earth's the matter, Bill?"

"Oh, nothing!" Bill answered. "I just saw the surrender of Detroit by General Hull in the War of 1812."

Then Miles and Bill both laughed, and they decided to have something to eat and see if that wouldn't help Bill sleep more quietly.

The next Bill knew he was awakened by a streak of sunshine in his eyes, and when he looked out of the ports he saw a mass of reeds on both sides of the boat, rising high above the cabin.

In another hour the boys and the dog turned out for the day. They spent a long, hot day there under the sun, out of the wind. Worst of all, mosquitoes came swarming

through the reeds and attacked them ravenously, including Gyp, who turned somersaults and rolled over and over, turning accusing eyes on the boys who kept him in such a place.

"There's some mosquito-netting around this boat somewhere," Bill remembered. "Captain Jogues had it out one day."

"We'll find it!" Miles cried, hitting himself much harder than he would have permitted any one else to do without a challenge.

They found the netting, neatly folded, and after cutting pieces the size of the ports, they fitted them in with long reeds bent into spring hoops. With the doorway hung they smoked the insects out, after which they had only the hot afternoon to contend with.

XVII

TURTLE-CATCHER AND SAILOR OF THE SAIL

THERE were miles of green marsh around them, with red-wing blackbirds twittering and glancing over them. Far to the westward there were roofs of buildings visible, and a huge red steamer with silver-painted smoke-stacks. To the southwest was the smoke of a city beyond a blue lake of miles' breadth.

The boys, on the roof of the cabin, sat looking at the scene with their heads but little above the level of the reeds. Suddenly Bill noticed another steamer behind the red one—a huge black steamer, followed by another red one a few hundred yards behind. Looking up the river, he saw the smoke of other steamers coming down, one behind the other. Then, out on the lake—St. Clair Lake—he noticed steamers going rapidly toward Detroit.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's a regular procession!"

And so it was—one of the greatest parades of merchantmen in the world. One after another these great steamers drove down the narrow waterway, bound for Lake Erie ports, for Cleveland, Ashtabula, Toledo, Buffalo, and the Welland Canal; and the two boys, looking at them, began to realize something of the vast Great Lakes commerce.

They had seen steamers in the Welland Canal looming strangely as they stepped down the mountain-side locks; but here they saw the fleet of far larger steamers driving down steadily, blanketing their view of cottages, hotels, and clumps of woodland, and shutting from their sight great breadths of the far horizon. The steamers were a long way off; but they showed by contrast their great size, towering like houses of many stories above the water-level, high at the bow and stern, like those old sailing-vessels whose pictures accompany the accounts of the thrilling search of master mariners into the unknown seas of the West — Columbus, the Cabots, Americus Vespucius, Henry Hudson, Pedro Cabral, Ferdinand Magellan—only these were steamers, and instead of carrying sails they spouted black smoke from their lofty stacks of various colors, blunt, huge, and

modern, new to the two youths who noticed them for the first time there above the bending and flickering tips of the beautiful marsh reeds and grasses.

A steamer going up light carried its load water-line fifteen or eighteen feet above the water surface, and as the under body was red and the upper black, the steamer made a curious contrast with the down-coming loaded boats. The weight of the engines, shaft, coal, and structure aft kept that end down, while the bow stood away up out of water, and the long deck sloped aft at an incline which seemed the greater in comparison with the horizontal lines of the loaded boats.

The boys were startled just then by a voice close at hand in the reeds. Looking, they saw a little, old, gray-whiskered man in a wooden boat, poling along with the ten-foot handle of a curious three-prong grapple of metal, about nine inches long and almost flat.

"Looking at the big empty, eh?" the man nodded. "She surely does stand up some. They'll be filling up some of those forward holds with water if it blows much, for she'd yaw around a lot in a gale of wind. You take it in these narrow waterways and in the canals, and those big steamers blow around like

skiffs if they are light. Sometimes, light boats can hardly get up through the Welland, and many a time you'll see steamers tied in at about every level. When they get that new canal built down through, with seven locks instead of two dozen, they'll save a lot of time in wind-bound delays, as well as in locking through. They're going to draw off a lot of water, too; that new canal will take enough water to make them open their eyes at Niagara Falls—see if it doesn't!"

By the time the man ceased his explanation the boys had recovered from their surprise, and Bill noticed a long, narrow, deep box in the little boat. The box bottom was covered with two or three layers of turtles, and by the sign of the grapple on the end of a long pole Bill knew the man was a catcher of fresh-water terrapin.

"I didn't know there was turtle-catching this time of the year," Bill suggested.

"Well, you know those club sports? They want turtle soups; they don't care about the flavor—just the turtles is what they want—"

"Come aboard," Bill invited, as the boat came alongside, and the man jumped nimbly to the cruiser deck and tied the light trot-line painter to a cleat.

"I don't catch turtles much in summer," the man said, sitting under the awning the boys had spread and taking off his straw hat. "They are not much good now. The bulls are a little strong, anyhow, and the cows are kind of tasteless, but the clubs don't know. I know. There are only twelve or fifteen men in the country who can catch turtles. I fish in the fall and early winter; then they are at their best. From October, or say late September, till January, is the best turtle-fishing. I have caught twenty dozen in a day down in southern Illinois, and here I have caught nearly as many."

"I suppose you see them on the logs," Miles began.

"Oh, but no! You could catch a few that way. You pole around in a boat, here in these marshes. On little brooks and bayous, or coves, you walk along the edge. You read the water like you read it for muskrats, and the banks like you read it for mink. They have their tracks, their runways, their sunning-places, their holes; and you must understand them, indeed you must! For thirty years I have caught turtles. I began for a little club, which alone knew the fresh-water turtle was good, but they told no guest what was in the

soup—till too late! They are like the Chesapeake Bay terrapin.

"Well, I was then a fisherman and a trapper; also I sold herbs and roots. Little by little I have developed a trade in turtles. I supply restaurants here at Detroit, and in Chicago; more than I can supply they demand, for except like this I will sell no turtle that is too young, and I sort them. The cows are best, sixty to one hundred and twenty years old. The bulls are never so good. To be of value they must be from twenty-five to thirty years old. I am—"

"How do you know how old they are?" Miles asked.

"They will measure at least five and one-half inches across. The ten black lines on the under side of the shells have begun to fade near the center lines. As they grow old the black lines spread toward the circumference of the shell, till they are a hundred years old, and by one hundred to one hundred and thirty years the black is all gone. Oh, but those old ones are sharp, and you can see it in their eyes. What things they know, those old turtles! The race between the tortoise and the hare wasn't any fake. It was like the tortoise to win that way—to keep

going. I one time put forty turtles into a hollow stump, and I piled stones on the top to a great weight, and went home. On the next day, when I came to pack them, only five remained in the stump, and I could track only six or eight around in the pasture there. They had, all together, pried off the stones, as they say the salt-water crabs hold one another by their nippers to help one another.

"Turtles have worked out many puzzles. You never find more turtles on a stream or in a marsh than the place can support comfortably. On a creek that has never been fished for turtles you find no young turtles. The young turtles all 'go West,' we turtlers say. We find them moving out across the country, seeking new waters. We sometimes find a school of bulls and cows in a pool. One time I took one hundred and fourteen—forty-eight, thirty-eight, and twenty-eight—out of little coves. Usually, there are from six to twenty terrapin in a pool.

"But all the little turtles are not eating turtles. Mud-turtles are stink-pots, and of no use, but they eat insects. I have seen greenhorns with almost all mud-turtles—ach! I do not know if they enjoyed what they ate. I mind my own business. The fresh-water

terrapin are vegetarian, except that they eat eggs of water-snakes, and where there are terrapin there are no snakes to speak of. They eat insects, too, more or less.

"It is the snapping-turtle that eats young ducks and geese and fish. How they do reach up and seize the things that swim over them! I have caught them to more than twenty pounds, and I hear of one that weighed over forty pounds at Fulton Market in New York, years ago.

"As I say, this hot weather is not time for turtles, but the club it so desires, and to favor them I am out to-day, but not again. Another two months and I shall begin. I fish till the ice is too thick, and then I go south, and farther south, till I have made my winter's catch. Then I return home to my books and microscope. These waters and these marshes are wonderful. Behold! I have found a pearl of great price in the mussels; it is my talisman! It saves me from danger, and keeps me in good luck. One time I started forth and nearly all day I fished, and every turtle slipped from my grapple. I could not understand. I thought it was only my eyes were old, or my hands trembling, and then I thought of my

pearl in its little case. See! Do not touch it! Saw you ever a pink pearl like that? I know you did not."

"Gracious! Where did you get it?" Bill exclaimed.

"Ah, my boy, there are tons of shells in that little creek, and I have a hundred pearls from it; but this is the best of them all. I do not care to answer questions. Good day."

The boys begged him to stay, and invited him to have dinner with them; but the little old man merely shook his head. He climbed down over the side of the boat and poled away; but before he was out of the little marsh lane they saw him reverse his pole, slip the three prongs swiftly into the depths, as if it were a spear, and the next instant he swept a turtle into the boat and dropped it in the box. Then he poled on up the waterway, around the bend, out of sight among the reeds. For a little while they could catch glimpses of the shining prongs through the reed tops until boat and boatman disappeared and the marsh was still and wild as ever.

Long as the day was, the boys now thoroughly enjoyed the marsh. There were birds flying around—swallows and swifts, red-wing blackbirds and other residents of the marshes.

Moreover, every once in a while there would appear an ungainly bird walking among the reeds—a bittern or a rail. Once a flock of grebes came through a muskrat swimway, one behind the other, and passed under the bow of the boat, murmuring and talking among themselves.

"You could write a book about what you could see in this marsh," Miles remarked, as he looked at the steamers, the far settlement of St. Clair Flats summer resort, and the near details of birds, marsh, muskrat ways, and the fish which came swimming around them seeking minnows, frogs, and other bait with which the waters abounded. Even a huge snapping-turtle appeared, stopping to blink at the motor-boat as if it were an intruder.

When night came at last the boys backed the boat out of the weeds into a channel a few rods distant, to start away. Now that it was dark, they became aware of a flashing of heat lightning and a quiver in the air that seemed to be the vibration of unheard thunder.

"Going to have a storm?" Miles asked.

"I shouldn't wonder," Bill replied. "These marshes would be laid flat by the wind. I

don't want to be caught where we can't turn around. I don't want to take that storm out there in the open lake, either."

"I suppose Lake St. Clair gets rough, too, sometimes," Bill said. "We'll drop anchor in a little pond in the marsh, with room to swing around when the wind shifts."

Hardly were they snug than the storm swept out upon the lake and flung itself across the open waters, accompanied with angry thunder. The lightning was blinding. In five minutes the boat was rocking and tumbling about.

"The waves are washing through the reeds. It's a good thing we didn't stay out in that open water," said Miles. "This would throw a steamboat! I hope those others didn't come up the lake, or, if they did, that they're under the lee somewhere. I thought it was going to be a bad one."

The boys looked out of the ports and watched the light exploding in the clouds and scattering down on all sides, visible through the gray rain. The reeds leaned and bent before the gale, sometimes apparently lying flat on the water. As they looked they saw the channel begin to move, as they thought, and then it dawned on them what was happening.

"She's dragging her anchor!" Miles shouted.

"Get out the other hook, Miles!" Bill shouted. Miles leaped toward the door, throwing off his coat. When he came out on deck the lightning revealed the fact that he had come a little too late. Already the stern of the boat was in the reeds, and they could feel the bottom pounding on the shallows.

"Get forward and haul in the line!" Bill shouted, and himself kept to the wheel, where he threw over the self-starter and drove the nose of the boat into what was now almost a cyclonic gale. Miles, on his hands and knees, crawled forward on the cabin, and at last caught the anchor line and pulled in the slack as the boat began to make headway into the wind. Little by little he recovered the line, till it hung straight down into the mud, the anchor having been pulled deep by the strain. As the boat went past the anchor Miles caught the line around a steel head and held it. The anchor was lifted out of the mire by the pull of the engine, and the boat crossed the hundred yards to the reeds, where Miles threw the anchor over again. On the other side he threw out the wide-flange mudhook, and as the wind blew

the boat back on the ropes he paid them out.

"Hold 'er!" Bill called, when about thirty yards were out.

Miles brought up his lines on the steel head and made fast to cleats.

"She'll hold now," he called to Bill; and the two settled down in the cabin again.

"They have some bad ones up here on the Lakes," Bill remarked. "It's an awful storm —as bad as anything I ever saw. Any one who travels here wants to know a squall is coming by the feel of the air or the looks of the clouds at the horizon. This one will make a lot of trouble for people up and down to-night. We'll go on up Lake Huron next. We never saw those islands up there in Huron —Manitoulin, Cockburn, and those other islands. We can kill time up there."

Miles agreed.

"Let's see if they are as interesting when you look at them as they are on the chart. We'll start for Sarnia to-morrow morning, and get supplies, and then go cruising around till we see where we are."

The storm settled down to a steady blowing long before morning, and the two again turned in till after daybreak, when the

weather had so far settled that they could drive out into the St. Clair River and swing along up the river without feeling as though they were going to be blown ashore, if they didn't keep the boat nose to the wind. Leaving the marsh behind them, they entered Sarnia port to take on supplies.

They stopped at Sarnia, on the Canadian side (opposite Port Huron), and there they had a glimpse of the departing glory of the Great Lakes timber industry. They left their boat with a fisherman, and went uptown looking for supplies. On the way back they passed a lumber-yard. The lumber-yard was not very large, no larger than the one at Hinckley, where Bill lived, but it had the look of having been larger at some time in the past. Along the dock were moored three boats—a steamer, a schooner, and a barge—all built of wood and all old, in spite of the paint.

Now that they thought of it, this schooner was the first sail-boat they had seen, except the ferry-boat down on Black River Bay, on Lake Ontario. The men on the schooner were all old, too, with one exception—a tall, flat-faced, sharp-nosed young man who seemed to be the mate, for he ordered the gray-haired

old men around, setting up ropes and clearing up the deck. One man was sweeping the deck, and the debris he pushed toward the river rail was long shreds of bark and chips—cedar, as Bill recognized.

There were piles of lumber down the bank; but where the boys came to look at the boats were high, long piles of cedar railroad ties—thousands upon thousands of pieces stacked fifteen or twenty feet high.

As they stood there a steamer, painted green and wearing the name *Prince of India*, passed down the river—the St. Clair River. She was not half so large as the red freighter that was going up-stream; but the deck was loaded with long sticks of timber, all squared, to the size of which Bill called Miles's attention.

"Why," Bill exclaimed, "some of those sticks must be forty feet long."

"Yes, an' some's seventy-five feet long; an' I've seen 'em in the old days as was a hundred and twenty-five foot long," a voice cried behind them. "And take a good look at that steamer as she goes down, for she's one of a great fleet that worked out of Garden Island, down on Lake Ontario, off'n Kingston. I take it you boys are sports an'

Yankees? I seen you come off'n that bit of a yacht there; but take a look quick at this schooner right here! She's older yet than the steamer that's carryin' logs. If you don't look quick, she may sink where she is an' then you'll never see what these lakes was full of back in the eighties an' seventies. I was just a baby then, you might say, an' the first time I ever climbed was into the riggin' of a schooner. I'm a sailor, I am. There ain't many left, an' the schooners is about all gone. They's some down in the Oswego an' Kingston coal trade, but not to amount to anything.

"Why, I kin remember when they had tugs as big as small steamboats towing schooners down this here river, I can. A tug 'd take ten, twelve, twenty of them schooners and snatch 'em down from wind to wind, timber-loaded an' lumber-loaded, an' some grain; an' they salted lake fish them days, but now they package-ship 'em on ice, an' they gits to the breakfast-table with a flop left into their tails yet, yes siree.

"I'm a sailor of the sail, an' I never shipped into a steamboat in all my borned days, I ain't, an' I ain't never a-goin' to, not if I have to be a farmer. Why, it ain't sailin', poundin'

along up wind an' down, into one of them cargo-boats. Now look a' that boat! See them lines runnin' fore 'n' aft? Them's wireless, them is, an' if the captain's got the stomach-ache he kin have the doctor to the Soo or meet 'im off the customs to Detroit into the mail-boat; that's what they kin do with wireless, an' they do do it, too. I seen 'em throw a box of pills over the rail fer the cap'n right here to Sarnia—ordered by wireless.

"Now I'm shipped on this here schooner. They wanted me to come fer a dollar an' a half, into this old coffin, fer that's all she is. She's goin' out sometime, an' she'll bury herself an' the crew into the lake some'r's, that's what she'll do. It's 'yo-he-ho' at the pumps every day as 'tis now, to keep the water out'n yer berths. But I told the cap'n, I did, that I wouldn't ship into no coffin fer less'n two dollars a day, an' he wouldn't pay me at first, an' I stuck to it. I hadn't a dollar, an' I hadn't a cent; but I got a place to sleep till I git ready to go. That's the cap'n comin' now—that feller with the split ear; an', say, he's some cap'n, he is! Oh, but he's a hard man. In them old days a feller could be perticular, an' he needn't to ship in no coffin 'thout he was broke or ketched short.

"Now if yer a sailor, yo' gotter take a berth when you finds it, an' the pay's diffrent now an' it used to be. I be'n a mule, tow-boatin' a schooner up the Welland Canal, cordellin' 'er through, hours an' hours a-draggin' the livin' lights out of a man, an' you a prayin' you'd die next step—an' never realizin' that the day 'd come when you'd look back on them days of the bellyin' sail an' the tow-line with hope an' sorrow. I'm a sailor of the sail, an' my father was before me, an' before him my granddad come down this here river with whiskers of ice from peak, boom, an' halyard, never dreamin' as they'd swing a bosun's chair from the fo'castle to the poop, so's the cap'n needn't to walk aft to dinner when the waves is washin' across the hatches. Sixty-four hatches into her hold has that ore-ship there."

"Aboard, there, get aboard, there, Skindy! Look at that mess that's gotta be cleaned up, you!"

"See that?" the sailor exclaimed, dropping his voice as he threw his dunnage-bag down on the deck. "In the old days he'd knocked me down there, for me talkin' that-a-way to you kids; but times is changed. Why, dad blast it! I've had a captain say 'please' to

me! But not this un—this un with the split ear; he's a hard— Aye, aye, Cap'n!"

The sailor swung himself down by the frayed stays, and with a kick sent his bag through the forecastle hatch, and with a jump ran to help an old gray man who was short and much too fat—another of the old-time sailors whose race is passing from the Lakes, giving way to the men whose feet are accustomed only to steel decks with myriads of intersecting lines of round-headed rivets, and who know more of donkey-engine lubricating-grease and steel mooring-lines than they do of sails and booms.

There was a smart little breeze out of the east, up-stream. The captain of the split ear sent two men to cast off as sheets croaked through the blocks. Old, lead-shaded sails with new white patches and pale patches began to rise to the sound. The worn and splintered craft fell away from the rotting dock, and, heeling more and more to the wind, she drifted out into the current, losing at first as she drifted down with the current. Then under her stern the green water began to swirl and eddy, with fast-bursting bubbles appearing. She began to gain, and soon she was abreast of the boys, a hundred yards out.

At the wheel whistled the youngest man aboard, a talkative sailor who would not ship on a steamer because deep in his heart he was heir to the hate that sailors of the sail long have had against the burners of coal. Somehow, on that battered and tattered remnant of an ancient fleet the young man seemed out of place, but his heart was old and brave. He would rather ship in a "coffin" than bow down to the grease and smudge and sheet-metal plates of propeller ships.

XVIII

THE WILD MANITOULIN

BILL and Miles remained only a few hours at Sarnia. Two men brought their supplies down to the launch in a push-cart which was well loaded. Once more they started on their way, and shortly, around the bend, they came into the open lake—Lake Huron.

It was with considerable emotion that they gazed out on its widening waters. Dimly they could remember the sad story of the Hurons, a great Indian tribe who had been hunted and driven farther and farther away by the stronger nations of the Iroquois, till in some far land they finally lost their identity as a tribe.

The widening of the waters and the receding of the land changed now from a pretty river-bank to a lake shore with wide sand beaches which told of waves that came rolling in, pounding upon the land—beautiful, yellow sand, glistening and gleaming under the sun-

shine; but the beach was, after all, a scar that told of the hostile attack of swaggering waters upon a proud and immovable land.

Here at the foot of Lake Huron the boys began to feel the loneliness and the vastness of the Lake Region. Here they saw the darker waters of the greater depths. Erie and Ontario had seemed warm and bright in their moods, but old Huron seemed chill even under the summer sun. Its color was darker, by far, and the shore-line was storm-blasted. They noticed a tree which stood up stiff and blunt on the shore, an aged pine—too twisted and gnarled, apparently, to make commercial timber, which seemed literally to present a shoulder to the northwest gales. Its branches trailed away over the land for many feet, while toward the open water the branches were short, stubby, and bristled.

As the motor-boat drove out on its course toward Manitoulin, and the land was gradually left behind, more and more the boys felt an antagonism between the lake and the shore. Even when the south shore, the Michigan shore, was so far away that it was a mere blue blur, dancing in mirage over the shimmering lake surface, the shape of the blur and the bluntness of the outline was that of resist-

ance to the gales and waves that sweep, and have swept for ages, across the lake. That whole low shore showed, as the shores of neither of the shallower lakes below had, a blunt, tired outline, as if even the stones, the sand, and the jagged and broken woods patches had grown weary and hopeless as slowly the waves and the winds and the frost, working together, had beaten back the shore-line despite the hero resistance of unyielding stone and the patient submission of the gentle, broken sands which have no place of rest.

"It is war!" Bill exclaimed as he looked down the lake toward the shore-line where, even on that bright, sunny day, they could see the quick, bright flash as wave broke against sand. Even when the wind was laid and the frost had been driven thousands of miles into the arctics, the waves beat incessantly, and with sullen pound, against the first line of defenses along shore—the sand and the fallen stones off the points.

Whatever they might forget about the Great Lakes, the boys could hardly fail to remember their sensations as they gazed upon and recognized the feeling of eternal combat, of patient resistance—never quite successful, never quite a failure—of unceasing aggression,

which nature reveals there at the foot of Lake Huron, the deep significance of splitting stone and shifting sands.

"Well, now we're going to the Manitoulin country," said Bill, as he looked ahead into the shoreless scene over the lake dead ahead. "It's quite a run up there."

Miles took the wheel, and exulted in the sensation of heading on a long course that carried them gradually farther and farther from shore. For hours the boys were silent, enjoying the undulating lake, with the only breeze that made by the boat driving into the still air. Somewhere to the northeastward was the entrance to Georgian Bay, and ahead was Manitoulin Island, nearly due north.

Gulls were flying over the lake or resting on the surface preening their feathers. The shore was now so far away that it seemed resting high above the surface of the water, an effect due to the mirage. Far ahead of them appeared a billowing smoke, and as it came nearer with the passing of the minutes, Miles and Bill saw, through the glasses, a big boat, and perceived that many people along the decks and high up in the pilot-house were using glasses to look at the motor-boat driving up the lake, so far from land.

When the steamer had passed, Miles turned to and began preparing dinner, while Bill took the wheel. The enchantment of the Lakes was upon them, and they felt as if they were in a dream, riding in the swaying and rocking boat, with the water swishing under the bows, quivering with the silent energy of the motors. The calm was in strong contrast with the turbulence of the storm of a few hours before, and there was only an occasional whiff of chill air as the cold under-water of the lake swirled to the surface and for a moment cooled the air perceptibly.

When the meal was ready they stopped the engines and sat at their ease in the cabin, eating, while the boat swung up and down. The sun was now far over in the sky, nearing the horizon, and before they started up again they set their lights, and Miles got out a sweater ready for the first watch of the long night, which was at hand.

"I'll hold her on the North Star there," Miles said, after they had examined the chart, and Bill agreed, and went below, to be called at midnight.

Miles, standing at the wheel, turning it a little, first one way and then another, guiding the craft through the dark, found the sensation

even more exhilarating than it had been by day. On him rested the responsibility of holding the boat to its course, and as he glanced back he wondered what must be the sensation of captains of warships and admirals of squadrons or fleets of men-o'-war, driving out to sea, hunting an enemy—and being hunted.

It seemed unreal, his being there; he could hardly believe that he had gone through the experiences which were actually his, but there was no gainsaying the fact that around his waist was a money-belt, and that in the money-belt were the satisfying layers of bills and coins—more than a hundred dollars, now, which he had earned.

"I'm glad this job is most done, though," he muttered to himself, with the uneasy feeling that perhaps this wasn't all there might be to it—counting the earnings—and he added, "I don't like this always dodging around and slipping around, watching out for people trying to get the best of you, or you of them."

The hours went by slowly, and at last, almost dead ahead, Miles raised a light, which he neared rapidly, till finally he knew that it was standing still out there on the waters.

"Bill!" he called. "A light ahead!"

"All right!" Bill answered, promptly, coming to the wheel to stand by. After a minute of silence he remarked: "That's a buoy-light —a flash over there. That's the Cove Island light. We're all right! We'll point a little to the westward, now, and strike Manitoulin above Buckeye Shoal somewhere. Well, you go below now, Miles; it's midnight."

About two hours later land appeared to the north and east, a dark mass in the night. When Miles awoke it was a bright, sunny day, and Bill was asleep in the berth opposite. Through an open port he could see a wall of rock a few rods distant, and on the other side, farther way, there were evergreen trees, mostly small cedars, and a strip of beach.

It was a narrow gorge where the boat was anchored. If it had not been for a gentle current of a stream, holding the boat taut on the anchor-line, it would have been difficult to tell which was up and which was down; but Miles knew that the lake was somewhere astern, and probably not very far astern at that, although there was only a bend in the rock and woods to show whither the stream led.

Miles drew a long breath. He was growing weary of the steady drive, and the rest and

relaxation seemed good. He was tired; he hadn't realized how tired he was till now, as he sat down in the fresh summer air on the cabin deck, listening to the birds chirruping among the cedars and somewhere, at a little distance, a woodpecker pounding away at some dry, reverberant stub of a tree.

It had been a fine thing traveling up the Great Lakes as he had been doing. He could feel that in his head and heart, as in his arms and lungs, there had been a great change. Looking back into the hard school-days, he could see what a little boy he had been. It was like looking away down a long hill at some small figure playing around in a pretty little meadow. He could hardly believe that he had been such a small figure as that only such a short time ago. How large his parents loomed in his memory; how trifling and insignificant the little things that had plagued him and spoiled his temper.

After a while he heard Bill stirring out, and when he came on deck Miles suggested breakfast. So they prepared the meal, and after eating they swung the little motor-tender down from the davits and went exploring the creek. A few hundred feet up-stream they found where the water sheeted down a cas-

cade, and it was all wilds in that direction. Turning back, they ran down past the cruiser to the lake, and found that it was half a mile or so distant. Running out into the open water, for it was a calm day, they found themselves along a wild and barren coast, with rocks and bays and an occasional sand beach. As far as they could see it was a rough land, with no sign of cultivation or inhabitants.

"That is cut-over lands," Bill remarked. "They've skinned off about all the timber that is good for anything. That's an old burn-up there, on that hill. It's a pretty rocky country, too!"

"It looks pretty."

"Fine. I didn't suppose there was so much wild land in this country. I thought it was all summer resorts and farms. Let's go ashore and see what kind of animals are running around here."

Sailing along the shore for a mile or two, looking for a favorable place to run the skiff into, they rounded a little point, and then Bill uttered a low exclamation and Gyp raised his nose eagerly.

"Look!" he whispered, pointing ahead. "In the water there!"

Miles looked and saw a dark, almost black figure a hundred yards or more ahead. The next instant it raised its head and shook the water from a bunch of horns on its head. A few seconds later, hardly thirty yards from the animal, the skiff came to a stop, Bill having shut off the engine, and the two boys sat gazing at one of the wonder creatures of the American continent, a huge moose, which returned their gaze quite as if it had been a park animal instead of a free roamer of the Manitoulin wilderness.

The moose turned and walked slowly through the few lily-pads in the water toward the shore, where it disappeared into the woods, quite the most extraordinary sight the boys had seen on the Lakes, so they thought.

They had not thought of the country as wild land. They had supposed that all along the Great Lake shores were farms and cities and villages. Especially they had regarded Manitoulin Island, one of the largest in fresh waters—the largest in America—as farm country; but here was a moose, and when they approached the shore a way farther on they found that there were more than moose in that rough and stony land.

There were bear tracks, deer tracks, fox tracks along the sand, and mink and muskrat tracks where a little stream came down into a kind of a marsh at the head of a deep, narrow bay. There were numbers of partridges and rabbits there, too, and it was as wild as any place that Bill had ever seen — an Adirondack wild, except that there were cedars as well as other evergreen trees.

Some of the little streams that came out of the woods were black water, like the swamp waters of the West Canada and other Adirondack streams. On one still water, between the reeds of a cattail marsh, they came to a flock of young black ducks marshaled by an old duck whose sharp glance did not fail to embarrass the two youths who meant no harm.

They drove around in the little motor-skiff nearly all day, returning to the cruiser at intervals, to make certain of finding at once any message that might be brought. That night Bill rigged up a jack-light, and they went along the shore of a sandy bay, where they had seen many tracks. They were not surprised to see ahead of them, in the beam of the white carbide light, two deer, looking white in the dark, and a few rods

beyond an old bear, which looked awkward and anything but ferocious as he side-stepped along the edge of the water, very suspicious of the thing that blinded his blinking little eyes.

The transition from the express-business commerce, with its odd and repellent men and extraordinary experiences, to the peace of the lake shore was so sudden that the two boys found it hard to realize that in the few short hours of a night they had been transferred from farms and cities to woods and burnings. A cast of trout flies revealed fish in plenty, not only in the streams, but out in the lake, where Bill threw over a trolling-spoon of large size and heavy braided line, just for fun, with no expectation of catching anything.

In water, according to the chart, about thirty fathoms deep, he sank the great spoon almost to the bottom, on a line hundreds of yards long. It took much strength to hold it, and then suddenly there came a snapping jerk, followed by another one. The next instant the line was burning his fingers as he tried to hold it. Stopping the motor, Miles watched the fight that came, growing more and more excited as Bill caught the line in his cap, to save his hands. He pulled in at

one time, and again he had to let go as the fish surged away.

It seemed hours before Bill could take in much line, but at last he was surprised to find the fish coming up, wabbling heavily on the hooks, and when he caught sight of the white body deep in the water he uttered a cry of astonishment. He had not expected any spectacle like that which now flickered and wavered deep in the lake, flaring with silvery hue in thirty feet of water.

In another minute the fish rolled up out of the depths onto the surface, lying on its side and gasping.

"What an awful size!" Miles cried, and Bill, with both hands, caught the fish in the gills and dragged it in over the side of the skiff, while Gyp nipped one fin to help lift.

"He'll weigh thirty pounds!" Bill exclaimed with glee. "And he's a trout—one of those lake trout!"

Sure enough, that was what it was—a trout as long as Bill's leg and about as large around, a trophy the like of which Bill had never dreamed. They motored home to the cruising-launch, and for supper that day they had fried trout, sliced off like beefsteak and rolled in

corn-meal. They had seldom eaten a more delicious meal.

Thus for several days they hunted, fished, and wandered around, going ashore to climb the rocks and follow moose and deer runways up among the fireweeds.

Then they had another surprise. They were sitting on the cabin of the cruiser one afternoon, leaning back at their ease, when suddenly around the bend below them, toward the lake, a canoe came into sight. It was a birch-bark canoe, and in it sat a straight-backed man of dark visage and long arms, wielding the paddle. He wore a woodsman's clothes, including a dark shirt and two-inch-wide suspenders. His hat was an old and ragged felt which had faded from black to a greenish-brown.

When he had come within thirty yards of them, Bill sprang to his feet with an exclamation:

"An Indian!" he whispered. "He's an Indian!"

At that the man smiled, showing beautiful white teeth.

"Yes, I am an Indian!" he repeated. "See! Perhaps you have a can of corn, eh? Some tobacco?"

After all, this Indian was quite harmless. Also, he would be very glad if they had some baking-powder, as well as a can of something. When they invited him in to have something to eat he responded with alacrity, but how he managed to step out of the canoe, which was hardly nine feet long, without upsetting it, they could not tell. While Miles set up what seemed a large lunch, Bill learned that the Indian was camped several miles down the island, where his family were picking berries. He had come up that far to see if an old burning in the woods near by did not have more berries than where they were.

The Indian was quite hungry, apparently. He ate about two pounds of cold fried lake-trout, a loaf of bread, a pound of crackers with molasses on them, a can of cold tomatoes, and drank at least three pints of cold tea, with half a pound of sugar poured into it out of the sugar-bowl. Dipping the sugar out with a spoon seemed too slow for him.

"Not eat again this week!" he remarked with satisfaction, as he rose from the bare table.

Nevertheless, the boys made up a package of food for him, and he paddled away in the canoe down-stream and out of sight. When he was gone, Bill exclaimed:

"It's too bad! A man with a face like that—strong, and bold as a lion—running around in that way and going to pieces. It seems as though they could have made something else out of the Indians besides beggars and vagabonds."

"I hadn't thought of that," Miles answered, "but the whites couldn't do anything with them—"

"'Welcome, Englishmen!' was the first greeting they gave the white men, and all the white men did was to try and capture the Indians' lands and their game, and swindle them in trading furs, and give them rum to drink. Suppose the white people had always played fair with the savage tribes, instead of beating them in every trade?"

"It was too bad!" Miles assented.

"Well, we can't help it; but he left us more than he took away with him! I hadn't thought of going berrying before he told about his family picking berries. Let's go look for a berry-patch."

"Good!" Miles cried.

They dropped down the creek, towing the skiff astern. When they came out into the lake they saw the Indian rocking offshore a ways, staying his appetite with some of the

things they had given him a little while before. Turning up the island, they coasted along slowly, looking for some opening or place that seemed likely to have plenty of berries on the bushes.

A few miles up the lake they came to a burning along the lake shore, and they soon found a snug harbor in a fish-hook-shaped little bay, and, dropping anchor, they ran ashore in the skiff, with Gyp and two pails for fruit.

Sure enough, there were berries there, bushels upon bushels of great red raspberries —the largest that the boys had ever seen. They were sweet as all sweet wild fruits are, full of savor and aroma and color. They ate as many as they put in the pails, and Gyp, after watching the boys enjoying themselves, began to snap down the berries, too. There was only one drawback to the pleasure. The old burning was swarming with little black flies and big bluebottle flies, and they had to fight them every moment.

There was a hot, light wind blowing across the dry barren, and in places where the fire had burned down to the stones, leaving them bare in the sun and hot underfoot, though only a few hundred feet away on the lake the

day had not been uncomfortably warm. They alarmed a woodchuck, which whistled shrilly almost under Miles's feet, and Miles jumped in the air at the sudden sound. An old hen partridge flared up in Gyp's astonished face and pretended to be badly wounded.

"Let's catch her!" Miles cried, but Bill laughed.

"She has young ones or a nest around here somewhere," he explained. "That's her way of protecting them. See! Gyp just misses her."

Gyp had rushed after the bird, and failed to catch her by just a safe margin of a foot or two. Then from around the boys sprang up little birds, hardly larger than robins, and darted away in all directions—eight or nine of them, the hen partridge's brood.

The old burning was alive with wild things. They saw several rabbits, driven out by their too close approach. When they came to a little "island" of evergreen trees, which had somehow escaped the forest fire, they were surprised to see a great buck deer with velvet horns appear in a shady thicket and stand on a bed of moss, looking at them, blinking.

Just when they felt the need of it most they found a spring under a boulder boiling up

through pale-yellow sand over several square feet. The water ran down a narrow gorge toward the lake, so cold that they could drink no more than three or four swallows, and in the brook were hundreds of little trout, which had evidently run up out of a flat marsh where the brook became a sluggish black-water stream before it ran out into the lake beyond.

They filled their pails with berries in spite of the flies, and then returned down a game trail to the lake beach of sand along the foot of the rocks. In the trail were deer and moose tracks, some of them very fresh, and they felt the loneliness of the shore in those prints of a wilderness page. When they reached the boat they were sweltering, but the water around them soon made itself felt, and soon they felt the cool breeze from over the lake. After they had eaten supper and lounged around awhile they went ashore again and went in swimming, nor were they alone, for while they were paddling around a deer came down into the water, not two hundred yards away, and dipped its head under the surface of the mouth of a little stream, as if after underwater growths.

They remained here by the old burning two

days, and then they swung the skiff up on the davits, hauled up the anchor, cleared the deck of chairs and other loose things that might be rolled overboard, and steered out into the lake.

With the chart open before them, and bearing along the coast of Manitoulin Island, they stood side by side in the wheel-house, wondering what things were ahead of them.

It was nearly dark when they ran into Mississagi Strait, and rounded Channel Point on Cockburn Island to head for Thessalon on the north side of North Channel. The chart showed many islands which they would pass on their starboard side, and they crossed the twenty-four miles to Thessalon light. With their lights burning, they sat looking ahead and around in the beautiful starlight. They raised Sulphur Island light after a time away out on the port quarter, and then they came in view of the Thessalon light, six or seven miles ahead.

"We made it all right," Bill chuckled, "didn't we?"

"It looks that way," Miles answered.

Two minutes later the motors suddenly began to jerk and miss. First one stopped running and then the other followed suit,

"What's the matter?" Bill asked, surprised, looking around as the boat came to a stop.

The two boys went to look at the engines, and turned their electric flashes on the wires, the feed-pipes, and the other parts of the engines. What had happened to one had happened to both of them, and that seemed to simplify the trouble, for the spark-plugs were all right and the batteries were strong with electricity. When they came to try the carburetors, however, they found that there was no gasolene coming down.

"That tank is empty!" Miles cried.

Bill chuckled, taking out one of the large cans of gasolene.

Miles laughed, too, and in five minutes one of the cans was emptied in the bow tank, and once more the engines started up and they were off again. From the light they steered in to starboard, and, seeing the pier light ahead, they turned on the search-light, ran around the end of the pier into a little harbor, where they made fast with bow and stern lines to a dock. With all snug they turned in for the night.

They were awakened in the morning, long after daylight, by a passenger-steamer coming

in. They went up on deck and found scores of people standing and sitting along the rail of the steamer, watching rousters hustling cargo on and off the boat.

"I'll get breakfast," Miles said.

Bill accordingly started up-town, but he stopped to ask a man with a blue cap, on which was printed in gold, "Canada Customs," where the post-office was.

"Go right up to the main street," the man said, "turn to the right, and you can't miss it."

"Thank you," Bill said, and turned to go.

"You came in on that motor-boat there?" the man asked, smiling.

"Yes," Bill said, "we came across last night."

"Across? Where from?"

"Manitoulin Island. Captain Jogues said we should meet him in three weeks on Lake Michigan, or he'd write or telegraph to us. We're killing time."

"Oh, you're just working for him?"

"Yes, sir."

"I see; cruising around, I suppose?"

"Oh yes; coming up about all the lakes, I guess."

"It's a fine trip, coming up the lakes."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll see you again," the man remarked, turning away.

"All right. Come aboard any time," Bill invited him, and went on up-town.

XIX

A CUSTOMS OFFICER

WHEN Bill returned from up-town, the man with the blue cap joined him at the warehouse on the dock, walked down the pier to the cruiser, and went aboard. He asked the boys how they came up the lake, and they told him about Manitoulin Island, Sarnia, and the Welland Canal.

"Is the boat yours?" he asked, casually.

"No, it belongs to Captain Jogues. We're just hired men. We are to meet him over on Lake Michigan the first part of week after next; we're just killing time."

"I see. May I look at your papers?"

"Papers?" Bill repeated, looking at Miles blankly. "Why—"

"You know he took some ashore at this end of the Welland Canal," Miles suggested.

"Yes, but—"

Bill turned and looked at the customs official, and said, frankly:

"He didn't tell us anything about that, but he has a desk set in the cabin here. We'll look and see."

With that he went to the desk, but found it locked. Miles came over, and they tried to open the desk, but they couldn't do it, so Bill turned to the man again.

"This is government business, isn't it? It's the law about those papers?"

"Yes," the man said, his face not smiling, and a look of suspicion in his eyes.

"Well, he didn't tell us anything about it, but we'll see what he has in here; of course we want to do exactly what is right."

"It's the best way," the man said.

Then Bill and Miles looked over the desk cover, and decided that they would have to break the lock.

"I'll get the tool-bag," Miles said, going back to the engine-locker. He returned in a minute with a large bunch of keys, and said, "I found these in the locker; I hadn't noticed them before."

There were twenty or thirty of the keys, and Bill tried them, one after another. They were peculiar thin and light keys, and before long one of them slipped into the lock and turned it.

There was the desk open, and in a pigeonhole labeled "Gov't" they found a number of papers, and one of these was headed, "Cruising Permit."

"That's the one!" the man said, looking over their shoulders and reading the written inserts. "That's all right; you have to have a cruising permit in Canadian waters. I should have thought he would have told you about that."

"Probably he forgot it—why, here are fishing and hunting licenses, too!" Bill exclaimed, with interest. "Do you have to have fishing permits in this country?"

"Oh yes."

"And here is some kind of a tariff paper—bond for firearms, too."

"That's so; they're all right. That's what I wanted to see. Sometimes people come over here and get into trouble with the customs laws. The penalties are very severe, on both sides of the line. When you cross the national boundary you have to watch out for the technicalities of the laws. If you had not had those papers, I should have been obliged to seize your boat and you would have been subjected to heavy penalties. The law doesn't excuse ignorance. Those American papers

are as bad as ours, too; but I see he has cleared all right, and that will help when you go back home if you have any question raised about the boat; our papers here are useful in the matter of getting your things back into your country. You see, if they thought this boat was built in Canada, or if anything on board here was Canadian, perhaps they would seize you over there, and make you trouble."

"They're awfully strict!" Bill exclaimed, thankful that the papers had been discovered.

"Yes, very. You have to make a deposit on rifles, shotguns, and all that kind of things. I see the deposit has been made. They allowed them in as second-hand, so he didn't have to put up so much money. When he goes back he can take the firearms with him, and our department will refund the bond money. We are not nearly so strict as the officials are on your side."

"People must get into a lot of trouble sometimes," Miles said.

"That is so. You heard about the Duck Island wire nails? Well, there was a steamer ran ashore there in a squall. To get her off they had to jettison sixty or eighty tons of wire nails in kegs. Some of our fishermen

grappled up the kegs and took them home. They didn't report what they had done; but, of course, we heard about it after a while, and went out and seized the nails. You see, they were American nails. The company had to pay seven or eight thousand dollars first and last to come clear, and then they were lucky."

"I should have thought they would have paid the fishermen for saving the wasted nails," Miles suggested.

"That is it; they would have made money salvaging the cargo if they had reported to the proper officials; but as the nails had never been entered, they violated the customs laws. The seven thousand dollars was better than going to Kingston, where they send offenders against the laws. It is always best to learn something about the laws of a foreign country before going there."

Then the man jumped over to the dock, bade the boys good-by, and walked back to his office.

"Why, I hadn't realized that this was a foreign country before—not that way!" Miles exclaimed.

"I hadn't thought much about it, either," Bill admitted. "I think that, now we've

learned so much, we ought to be glad we happened in to Thessalon."

"It looked pretty narrow quarters when we didn't know about those papers," Miles admitted.

Then they walked up-town together, and saw out of the corners of their eyes little groups of Indians who looked like foreigners in their own home land. They were pitiful groups, for the most part, lank, stooped, hollow-cheeked, dull-eyed. They shuffled along when they walked, and on their feet were strange kinds of footwear. One had a white tennis shoe on one foot and a patent-leather Oxford tie on the other—both badly worn and old.

They saw one Indian who wore leather moccasins and a derby-hat. The red men talked in whispers or low, whining voices, and they looked with sidelong, cringing glances —vagabonds and mendicants, apparently, with nothing to do and doing nothing but standing around.

Hearing the whine and roar of a sawmill, the boys followed the direction of the noise and came to a great mill with a large lumber-yard full of sweet-smelling piles of newly sawed wood. It was by the lake, and at a

long dock was a steamer, into which piles of boards were being hoisted by derrick. A boom was formed, and in the boom were thousands of soft-wood logs. The boys walked around to a group of men who were running these logs to an incline up which ran an endless chain with dogs that hooked under the floating logs and carried them up two or three abreast into the mill, where the saws screamed through them as fast as they appeared.

The loggers were nearly all Indians, and they ran across the logs and poled them in to the chain. As they stood there the boys saw that there was an open space around the foot of the incline, and Bill said he thought the men would have to get out and shove in a lot of the logs. Instead of going out to the logs, however, two of the men began to wind up a rope on a windlass. That drew the boom closer to the incline, and so the logs were kept coming. As the boys watched they saw a tug coming with snorting puffs, towing another boom of logs. As fast as one boom was emptied there would be another two or three acres of logs to swing in.

"Those Indians seem to be workers," Bill suggested to a man standing near by.

"They are good workers—for a week or

two. When they have a little money ahead, however, they quit. That is, most of them. That big, broad man, though, owns a house, and he has some money in the bank. Here and there is a good worker. Down on the Manitoulin there are some rich Indians, and just as good people as anybody."

When the boys walked back through town toward the dock they met five or six little girls. With them was a tall, dark-featured woman who was dressed as well as any woman they remembered having seen.

"She was an Indian," Bill whispered, with some surprise.

"Yes, and two of those little girls were Indians, too!" Miles added.

"I'll bet they'd all be hopping mad if some one called them squaws," Bill chuckled.

"Well, I don't think they need be," Miles argued. "You can see for yourself—there are Indians and Indians!"

"That's so. I suppose people with Indian blood have thoughts that no white man could ever have," Bill mused, wondering what he would be thinking about the birds and trees and great outdoors if he were only just enough Indian to feel the sensations that aboriginal woodsmen have.

"We might as well go on up the North Channel," Bill said. "We can go up to St. Joseph Island, and then swing around and come back down the American side into Lake Michigan."

"All right. I'll cast off," Miles assented, and they started out in the cruiser. They were just getting nicely under way when they heard a howling and a yelping inland, and a dog came tearing down the turn in the road, throwing the dust from his paws and squealing with anxiety. For an instant the boys could not imagine what was the matter, but as the dog struck the dock and left the dust rolling up behind him they recognized Gyp, who jumped clear over a luggage-truck that stood in his way and, striking the stringpiece on the pier end, rose at least six feet in the air and then came down into the water with a great splash.

"We almost forgot him!" Bill exclaimed, conscience-stricken, turning the boat back and coming alongside the dog. They lifted him up, and he pranced up and down on the deck, shaking himself and dancing for pleasure at having escaped being left behind.

"He was out seeing the sights, too. I'd like to know what he saw," Miles said, thoughtfully.

Miles steered around the Salon Point lighthouse and headed up the North Channel, he and Bill both keeping a sharp lookout for rocks and islands of which the chart showed many along the shore. A few miles away they saw the mouth of a creek, and, as it was getting late in the day, they turned into the little harbor. They knew it must be Bruce Mines.

It was just a little sawmill creek, with a few scattered wooden buildings on a bleak, stumpy hillside, where the railroad had a station and a track running down to an abandoned ore-pit. The wires along the railroad sent side-lines down to a store, but the wire was only an aggravation to the pioneer, the tired-settler appearance of the poor little place.

"It is hard for places to start up!" Bill said, looking at the uncomfortable and hopeless town.

They did not go ashore, but anchored in the creek; and in the morning they headed up the North Channel, where the chart told them they would strike among the islands of St. Josephs Chain, at the mouth of St. Marys River; and the thought of many islands could not fail to be attractive. When they came to the head of St. Joseph Island a little gap opened as if by magic before them in a small,

thicket-grown island. They ran into the shelter of a perfectly hidden bay which was only a few rods long.

They climbed to the knoll on the island, and, sitting under a low pine-tree, they could see lake steamers driving up and down St. Marys River channel to the southward. Yet they felt as detached from the world as if they had been explorers in a strange continent. They soon tired of inaction, and looked on the chart for other places to visit while waiting for the rest of the three weeks to go by. They found Lake George on the chart; this was a widening in the north outlet fork of St. Marys River, and they decided to go up to the head of the lake, past Squirrel Island, and visit the little village on the north side of the river branch where it enters the head of Lake George.

As they landed they saw that it was an Indian town, Point Charles on the chart. Another cruiser motor-boat was there with two young men on board, and greetings were exchanged.

"We're from Detroit," the strangers volunteered, and Bill and Miles said that they were from Lake Ontario; and when they had tied up, Bill and Miles crossed over to the strangers' boat, and they all sat down under the awning.

"Come to see the Indian settlement?" Ralph Colby, one of the strangers, asked. "Well, you'll find it worth seeing. They'll surprise you, some of these Indians will. They're the greatest in the world. They organized a theatrical troupe and played 'Hiawatha' all over this country. They went to Europe, too, and kings and kaisers and lords and all those people went to see them play, and dined 'em out. Then they came back here to live—and look where they live! Isn't it just like Indians? See that barn over there? It's only half finished, and up-stairs most of the houses are only half finished—regular Indian fashion. They play Indian parts all right, though. I have seen them. So you're touring up the Lakes? Well, you're having fun, then—everybody does. I knew a fellow down at Detroit once who was a queer Dick. He had a little old canoe, painted green, and he used to paddle around in it. For a long time nobody knew how he made his living, but they got on to him after a while. He bought a little skiff motor-boat, and then he bought a big boat. He was smuggling stuff across the border. They got him just last week—got him right down on Lake Erie. I saw it in the papers. Let's walk up-town."

So the four started, two and two. The place showed a sleepy kind of industriousness in the ambling two-wheeled carts in the street, the shuffling of tall, lank men along the sidewalks, the plaster houses with pieces of plaster broken off the laths.

"This is an Indian-reservation town, that's plain!" Bill exclaimed, as they strolled along, seeing little Indian children playing dignified sorts of games, and short, heavy Indian women with store hats, store dresses, and home-made baskets and porcupine-quilled moccasins on their feet. They met a party of young women, who carried pails and baskets full of raspberries, who looked with such wide-open, frank brown or black eyes at the youths that they stubbed their toes with embarrassment, even though there was nothing but the sidewalk to stub on.

"That pretty one was the singer they made such a time about," Ralph explained, after he had tipped his hat and passed them.

"That pretty one!" Miles exclaimed. "I thought they were all pretty."

They all laughed.

"That's a funny thing about Indian girls," Morris Roberts, the other cruiser, said. "The first time you see a bevy of them you do think

they are all pretty. I never could explain it, but after you get to see them as individuals most of them aren't really pretty; and that's the saddest thing I know about the Indians."

"It is too bad," the others echoed.

"Look at your dog!" Ralph whispered. "See how he steps around through this town with his nose and tail up. They say all the dogs that come here from other places walk around that way. I never believed it. They don't like the Indians—it's just as though they knew it wasn't a white man's town."

"It does seem so," Bill admitted. "Gyp doesn't even notice those little ones playing there. Generally he wants to play with children like that if they aren't afraid of him."

Then they returned to the landing, leaving behind the Indian village with its feeling of weather-beaten and time-worn decay—with its houses that looked as though they might leak, its new buildings unfinished, barns that had the air of neglect, and, more neglected than all else, its people. Their faces showed the difference between the races that worry and the races that suffer. They were a suffering people there in the little Indian village — paupered, neglected, and yet with

here and there an upright, alert, unflinching man or woman conspicuous among the many.

"Most of them look as though they hadn't any hope," Bill remarked, after he had thought about it awhile.

"That's so; but they have," Ralph explained. "If you stopped down on Manitoulin at the Indian towns there you would see the difference. Down there the Indians are nearly all beginning to grow. They own farms, have cattle, their daughters play pianos, and their boys work like—like good Indians. Now here is the dividing-line: up on Superior you'll find the whiskey-trade Indians—the sick Indians. They're almost all dead or dying up there. Here and there on Lake Superior there's a well Indian—just a few of them. Before long those well Indians will start up and they'll be like these Indians here, and then these will be like Manitoulin Indians. Nobody can guess how far the Manitoulin Indians will go ahead. They're mighty bright people, some of them."

The four boys ate together on Bill and Miles's boat, and after supper they sat on the deck talking and watching the moonlight upon the waters. They all felt and remarked how far it seemed from anywhere, there within a

mile or two of the greatest ship highway in the world—St. Marys River, through which hundreds of millions of tons of ship cargoes pass during the summer "open - season months."

The visitors returned to their boat, saying that in the morning they were going down the river homeward bound; and in the morning they started out soon after dawn, waving good-by as they passed out.

Somehow their going made Bill and Miles feel lonelier than they had felt before on the trip.

XX

"X" THE TOWN THAT WAS

IN the morning, when they turned out, the boys looked at the calendar and found that it was time to steer for Lake Michigan and to make their way to "X," where they were to meet Captain Jogues, and where they had determined to give him his boat and leave his employ.

It was a gray, chilly morning, and when they looked out across the water they could see only a short distance in some directions, but in others they could see several hundred yards. The fog was patchy and uncertain. They could hear the steamers going up and down the river blowing their three "keep-clear" blasts. Some were hoarse, bellowing roars, others shrill, staccato shrieks.

"Let's pull out!" Miles exclaimed, the spirit of adventure stirring him; but Bill hesitated as he considered the murk and the mist. After a time, however, when they had looked

at the chart and grown restless in their mooring, they cast off and floated out into Lake George and headed slowly southward with a slant to the west.

The atmosphere was so patchy that sometimes they could see the land a mile or more away and then they could not see forty feet. They blew their whistles at frequent intervals —a sharp, loud air-blast. Once, when they listened intently, they heard a sullen roar a long way off somewhere, they could not tell just where.

Gyp, refusing to remain in the cabin or pilot-house, climbed out on the deck and sat forward whining and sniffing as he turned his nose back and forth looking into the white mass which enveloped them most of the time. Suddenly he began to bark and growl and yelp. The boys could see nothing and hear nothing until a great dark shadow appeared almost over and against them. They heard water swishing and the rattling of machinery. The next instant they were looking at the widening port bow of some steamer whose deck was lost in the mist above them as it crowded upon them. They heard a shout away up in the air somewhere, and then the far-away jangle of bells. The steamer's bow-

wave lifted them and threw their boat out to one side, and for what seemed a long time the vast craft plowed along past them, and then, as their boat swirled half around in the coiling waters under her stern, they saw the steamer leaving them behind. As she receded they found themselves looking into the tunnel that she had bored through the fog. Astern they could see for hundreds of yards, it seemed, back into the fog through the same tunnel, in diminishing perspective, till in the distance they saw the black pit, like a hole in a wall, at the end. As they looked they saw a boat something like their own cut into the tunnel from one side and dash out on the other side as it continued its course.

Picking up their own course again and starting their engines, the two boys headed away, listening and watching, with their minds made up that they would be glad indeed when they were once more in safe shelter.

"I don't much like running in this fog!" Bill said. "It seems too risky."

"I didn't realize what it would be like," Miles admitted. Presently they came to land, and after cruising along shore at quarter speed a little way they turned into a snug little

harbor and cast anchor close inshore, as they guessed, somewhere near the south end of Lake George.

It was after breakfast the following morning when the fog lifted and the sun struck down through. The mist became white lengths of cloud overhead and then flashed away, leaving the surface of the water rippling with a little breeze. They could see now; and, pulling out, they picked up the Mud Lake range lighthouses and headed away for Detour Passage between Drummond Island and the Michigan mainland.

When they had made their way through the strait they saw by the chart that they could follow the shore or strike across to the famous Straits of Mackinac, about forty miles away; and, as it was such a fine day, they took the course across the open lake, past Martin Reef.

When, a few hours later, they swung through the Straits of Mackinac, past the historic islands, with their summer cottages and great hotels and gay summer-resort character, which could not quite hide from view the rugged and worn stones and island outlines, they could not help wondering what Jean Nicolet saw in 1634, when he came in his

bark Indian canoes past these same headlands and over waters uncharted, except as Indians drew maps for him on white deerskins or pieces of birch bark, or on the hard lake-shore sands. That was in 1634, as Miles remembered, for he had missed that question in the Regents' examination in American history. Champlain[1] had sent Nicolet to explore the Western wilderness, and Nicolet had ventured into those lands of savage Indians and down Lake Michigan seeking a western waterway through the continent which would lead to Cathay, or China. No one in those days had any idea how large the earth is. Nicolet traveled as far west as Green Bay, Wisconsin, and made trading compacts with the Indians.

Memories of Indian, French, and British warfare came to Bill as, with Mackinac Island on their starboard, they drove through the channel strait. They had an odd feeling that they were at the crossroads of the lakes. Steamers were coming and going, and they crossed the bows of a tow, a little tug with an

[1] The famous Samuel de Champlain, who founded Quebec in 1608 and was the first governor of Canada. He died in 1635, leaving books which describe his explorations of Lake Champlain, Lake Huron, and elsewhere, and his visit to Niagara Falls, which he was the first to set down upon a map.

old schooner whose masts had been stripped of sails. The schooner was deep-laden with some kind of cargo, and at the bow a sailor was working a lever up and down, throwing water over the side in intermittent spurts. The sailor worked with a free swing, as if he were used to the task.

The motor-boat passed on, and after passing St. Ignace, it entered Lake Michigan. They call St. Ignace the "Gate City of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan," and it was here that Father Marquette, discoverer of the Mississippi, founded a mission in 1671. As they passed by, a red steamer came out, deep-laden, and astern of it was another steamer with long poles on the deck.

Now the boys looked ahead of them, and, finding from the calendar that they still had several days before the three weeks were up, they headed away toward Beaver Island and the others which mark the foot of the lake. They judged from the railroad and steamboat folders which were in the cabin racks that these islands were primitive enough, since they did not appear among the advertisements of summer resorts, though the chart showed a number of lighthouses and many buoys marking long shoal.

They ran to one of the smaller islands, a mere black spot on the map, and, circling around it, found a snug little harbor, where they saw a few fish-net reels and some little cabins up the shore. Beyond the cabins were pastures and grazing cattle.

It was just the simplest kind of a little island home; and when they anchored, several boys and girls came down to look at them. When they went ashore in their tender a man came down to greet them and ask them to come up to the house.

"There don't very many strangers drop in here," he told them.

It was so far out of the way that some of the women had not been "ashore" in a year, and there were boys there who had never been anywhere except around the islands in the boats, helping to fish and sail. Somehow, the two visitors could not see how people could live in just that place, imprisoned as they were during the winter months. It made them think of a story regarding the life on Duck Islands down on Lake Ontario. The people who live on The Ducks in winter build little rafts with tripods on them, and fasten bottles with notes in them, which are sent adrift before a northwest gale. The wind carries the

little raft to the shore somewhere between Black River Bay and Cape Vincent, and there beach-walkers find them and mail the letters which are inclosed. But, of course, there is no way of sending mail out to the Ducks till the ice drifts back and away. So it is with the Beaver Island chain.

The boys bought some fresh milk and eggs and berries for their larder, and they had no better things to eat anywhere than they found on the little island. When toward night a fisherman came in in his weather-worn motor-boat, they took a fine lake-trout aboard with them for supper.

That night they went to a dance in one of the little cabins and heard the wild music of an island fiddler and accordion-player; and they saw the bouncing dancers as they tore up and down the platform to the beat of the music and the howls of the man who called off. The caller-off was used to giving orders in storms on the Lakes, and he issued orders to the dancers as he did to the men aboard his schooner.

Because they were mere boys, and because they looked good-natured and were not too well dressed, the islanders took them in. First they made Bill join the square set, and

stood him beside a fair-cheeked lass, who showed him the way through the mazes of the island dances. Then it was Miles's turn, and they showed him through, although Miles knew more about dancing than Bill, through his experience at dancing-school. It was a gay frolic, broken by a midnight supper.

It seemed almost a foreign people and a foreign land, there on the little island, for the people pronounced their words differently, and their tones were different, and they knew nothing of the changes of fashions. It was as far removed from the activities of the world as one could imagine, and yet across the dark waters at frequent intervals during the night they could see steamers in the great lake carrying trade, passing by, up and down, to and from Chicago and other southern ports, burning lights that were reflected for miles across the rolling waves.

They breakfasted at noon next day and then took to studying their charts. They decided that the chance of a long storm had better be avoided by going on down the lake-shore to "X," so as to be sure to be there when Captain Jogues should arrive. He might get in ahead of time himself, and then they would gain so much in transacting the

unpleasant business of resigning from his questionable employ.

So they hoisted in their anchor and headed away out of the little bay. Taking the compass course, they steered up the lake, working toward the shore. Toward evening they were close inland, and just before sunset they ran into the mouth of a creek and cast anchor again. It was a lonely place, like an old clearing, with no buildings in sight.

Next morning they went ashore and climbed the bank to look at the land. As far as they could see there were stumps and scrub-oaks. Bill discovered a little trap cubby on the bank of the creek, a little flat-stone shack which some fur-catcher had built there for mink.

After they had eaten breakfast they went on down the coast slowly, for they were nearing "X" now, and they did not wish to wait any longer than was necessary. Toward night they rounded a headland which they recognized on the chart, and turned up into the long, deep bay as dusk fell. No anchorage showed itself, and they lighted up and crept along, watching the shore. Suddenly in the moonlight they came around a point to a town—a strange-looking town with few lights, great, silent buildings, and round col-

umns of large size which Bill recognized as edging-burners or iron smoke-stacks; but there was no red glow in the spark-screens at the top of the burners, and when they stopped their motors they could hear no humming or roaring from saws or machinery.

"They've shut down!" Bill exclaimed, looking at the place. "Must have been a big break."

But when he took out the night glasses to search for a landing-place he found that there were great booms running from spile to spile, and that the booms were empty. He could see moonlight through holes in the roofs of the huge buildings. He could see that the long docks were broken, and the end of one dock was plainly crushed in, as if an ice-pack had jammed against it. Then across the waters they could smell wood, not the odor of new sawdust, but of old, wet sawdust in heaps that were passing into decay.

They steered slowly among old log-booms, and as they came close by, even in the moonlight they could see that the tops of the piles were crumbling in decay, and that where the huge iron boom-chain links swung around the piles the wood was cut deep and break-

ing away. They slid up on some submerged obstruction, but the motors easily backed the boat off of it, and they went on again through the maze of boom yards. At last they came to a long pile dock, and when Bill put out the boat-hook the point crushed into the rotten string-piece, which crackled before it. At last they found a chain, and, making fast to it by the bow and to a timber-head by the stern, they lay by for the night.

As they sat on the deck looking at the desolation of the abandoned mills they seemed to hear the whisperings of lost sounds—echoes of machinery that had fallen silent, and of footsteps of men who had gone away, and of falling timber which had long since been shipped to build far cities. They could hear thuddings and cracklings and low creakings and hollow boomings, with now and then a sharp crash. Away beyond the mill was the town, showing only a few lights; the sounds could not come from those dark streets and houses. They were too near for that, and it was some time before the boys realized what it was.

In those great buildings bits of wood were crumbling from the beams and flooring and falling from floor to floor, together with boards

and lumps of hardened sawdust loosened by dry-rot and worms. These were real sounds. Nevertheless, even after they had decided what it was that they heard, it still seemed an echo of the past. Even Gyp, listening and whining, seemed to feel the ghostliness of the sounds.

Looking around, to make certain that there was nothing near enough to fall on them if it should fall, they finally turned in to sleep as best they could, but it was a gloomy place, and they were glad enough when daylight came.

They could see, then, a pier down the bay which was at the town's water-front, and there were plenty of places where they could land to look for Captain Jogues. They cut loose, and, running past the old log-booms and mill-docks, they landed at an old tug-harbor, where an ancient tug lay half submerged at the side of a tumbledown tool-shop and repair-building. They picked their way across the doubtful planking and felt relieved to find foothold on solid ground.

They walked down the road of an empty old lumber-yard and thus came to the village where the mill-workers had lived. Most of the houses were empty. Some had their win-

dows broken, and others had been nailed up as if the owners had felt that perhaps sometime they would return. The sawmill had cut away the pine-trees and eaten itself out of business, and then starved to death. Now the village, which had depended on the mill, was starving, too, the houses falling in for lack of repairs.

But there were people there, the left-behinds. Some of them were old, and some of them were eking out a scanty living, fishing and trapping, hunting, salvaging and junking. They met a little boy running down the street with a piece of brass, green with verdigris, and shouting:

"Mammy! Mammy! Look what I foun'!"

It was a windfall, that remnant of a long-departed industry and relic of brief success. A little later they saw the boy and his mother, a gaunt woman with sharp, unhappy features, striding down the street toward an old weather-beaten sign which read:

JACK THE JUNKER!
BUYS ANYTHING!

On the corner was a great store-building, evidently with a record of great sales in its day. Now it was storm-worn, and only

a freshly painted sign — "POST-OFFICE" — showed that it was still occupied. The boys entered the store and looked about them. There were hundreds of feet of empty shelves, but down in one corner, near the dusty and webbed front window, was a supply of canned goods, a few cheap print clothes, and a small square box with pigeon-holes. As they entered, a man who sat in an arm-chair reading a newspaper turned around to look at them over his glasses.

"Well?" he asked, in a tone as if he were the proprietor of a great and thriving establishment.

"Is there any mail here for William Sayne or Miles Breton?" Miles asked.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" the man snapped. "Time you showed up! Where've you been?"

"Coming up the Lakes."

"Well, keep a-goin', then!" the man snapped again, turning back to his newspaper. "The captain won't come here. Got the motor-boat?"

"Yes," the boys answered, blankly.

"Well—um-m—it ought to be painted. Take that paint there and paint it—up the bay somewhere—paint it white, or any color. Go to Port Arthur on Lake Superior—and

don't be all day about it. G'wan! Those pails there—see!"

With that he turned back to his newspaper, and the boys, hardly knowing what they were doing, took the paint, a pail in each hand, and started away. As soon as they were up at the lumber-yard again they stopped to look at each other.

"What in the world—!" Miles exclaimed.

"There's a regular gang of them!" Bill exclaimed. "That man wants us to paint this boat so it won't be recognized—"

"Well?"

"I won't do it! I'm sick and tired of this scouting and hiding around. I don't know what to do. Of course, we'll have to take the plaguey boat to Port Arthur and give it to Captain Jogues. We'll take it to Port Arthur —I'd just as soon; we'll see that north shore of Lake Superior, then. I've read there is some great fishing up there—Nipigon trout. We'll go right up there, anyhow, as fast as we can."

"That's the best way," Miles assented, and, putting the paint in the cargo-pit, they cast off and started away in search of Captain Jogues again, that strange and questionable character who had given them so much experience, none of it quite comfortable.

XXI

THE SAULT STE. MARIE

WITH their Lake Michigan chart open before them, they struck along their wake toward the Straits of Mackinac. They followed the lake-shore, cutting across from point to point, but not swinging as far out from the land as they had at times on the trip down. They passed Beaver Island and the other islands at a distance, and struck through the straits in the evening. After dark, at the head of Lake Huron, they picked up the lighthouse flares and swung up past St. Joseph Island, where they ran into a little wooded bay and anchored, to sleep. The following morning they started on up toward the Soo, and asked a fisherman which canal they had better take to go around the Sault Ste. Marie rapids.

"Might's well go up on the Canadian side—they're purty polite to tourin' fellers," the fisherman nodded. "Got your Canadian papers, I s'pose?"

AMERICAN LOCK ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER SHIP CANAL CONNECTING LAKES SUPERIOR AND HURON

"Oh yes, we have them!" Bill answered.

"'Course, you want to stop there an' look at both sides the river," the fisherman remarked. "It sure is a sight, seeing them lake steamers goin' up through an' comin' down through."

They drove up the slight current in the great ship highway, answered whistle with whistle from the steamers they met, and, rounding a bend, beheld a town on both sides of the river—the Sault Ste. Marie of Michigan and of Ontario.

After their long sojourn in little towns and in the wild places, these solid blocks of brick buildings, with their suburbs of wooden houses, their gray-stone factories, and the low hum of great machinery, were very impressive. They slowed down a little as they swung in toward the north bank of the river, looking through the confusion of boats and long docks and smoky distances, wondering where the entrance to the canal could be. Discovering a sign, "Yeaury's Boat Livery," they headed in there to make inquiries. The liveryman was cordial to them, and asked them to tie up and make themselves snug for the night.

"You'd better spend a day or two around here," he advised them. "There's sights to

see, and it's worth seeing. Going up the North Shore?"

"We expect to," the boys told him.

"Well, it surely is worth running up to look at."

So they stopped there and looked around. They walked up through the Canadian Soo first, that late afternoon and evening, eating supper at a Japanese restaurant. Canadian restaurants seemed to be all Japanese or Chinese.

It was a new kind of town, this Canadian future city. There were some fine blocks, some fine new structures, and many old and time-beaten buildings. Some people were very business-like as they rushed up and down, but others sauntered along in a most leisurely fashion. Bill had seen towns like this down the Mississippi, towns which were just beginning to feel the awakening of trade and manufacturing. The air was vibrant with distant power and motion. Through the town at intervals roared the low, deep blast of some lake steamer coming in or dropping out of the docks. Sharp and insistent was the hubbub of countless drills boring into the stone of the water-front to make the harbor deeper.

They saw Indians, as in other Canadian

towns, and men who looked to Bill like loggers and woodsmen.

"To-morrow we'll go look at the American side," Bill said, as they went down to the boat, with their arms full of fruit and other supplies.

That evening they studied the chart of Lake Superior. "We'll see that shore!" Bill exulted, and at last they turned in for the night, Gyp sleeping on deck.

In the morning they crossed the ferry to the south or American side, and when they landed from the ferry a little way below them was a long gray building, several stories high, from which came rumblings and groanings of heavy machinery—a carbide factory. As they walked up-town they passed open lots and wood or brick buildings scattered around. In a block square was a great stone building, with lawn and shrubs and pleasant walks around it—"The Government Building," they read on a sign. It was a post-office and custom-house so large and empty that it seemed to jeer at the scattering insignificance of the little village.

The boys saw a beautiful school-building which, by its size and modernness, shamed most of the schools of their own state. When

they turned into a street that was all built up they knew it was the main street of town. Walking along, they came to a store where rifles, fishing-tackle, shot guns, and various other kinds of sporting implements were sold.

"There must be lots of game around here," Bill remarked, for he knew that a trading center indicates the character of the locality by the things offered for sale in the busiest stores. No other store seemed quite so lively as this sporting-goods store and its rivals up and down the street.

"They've some big game around here," Bill surmised. "That's a 401 rifle there—big enough for grizzly bears and moose. It's almost too large for deer."

"You've hunted some yourself?" a by-stander interrupted.

"Why, yes; some," Bill admitted.

"Well, that is a moose-gun; up the North Shore there's a lot of moose. They've come migrating down Lake Superior with the wolves. Why, last year there was a big cow swam right across the river, and she came up Main Street here. She turned off just up there and went back into the country. If you haven't been out in the country you've missed something.

There're lots of deer back here a ways, and partridges are as thick here as quail are down in the southern part of Michigan. It's wicked the way they kill quail down in southern Michigan—strings five foot long. Yes, sir, there's lots of game through this country, but back in a ways you'd think it was wicked the way they've cleaned out the timber, leaving sand and scrub-oaks. You came up the Lakes?"

"Yes—motor-boat."

"I thought so; you take anybody that doesn't live here, and they look different. This town came pretty near being the rival of Chicago. Tell you how it was," he exclaimed, with a burst of confidence. "You see, they made up their mind to develop the Soo water-power, and they picked out the land they needed, and the folks that owned the land got onto it. They asked so much money for the land that the capitalists just slipped over into Canada and put up their power projects over there—that fixed us on this side, all right. Now look at it! People on this side can go over to that side and hire out for day wages, and people on that side have got to come across with their pockets turned inside out and the linings of their coats show-

ing, 'count of the tariff and labor-protection laws. I tell you, they overreached themselves, those landowners; and you never saw a blow balloon flatten out with such a squawk as we did here when they moved those electric works over to Canada. Course, some day we're going to grow up real good, for we got the location and we got the country. Over there in Canada they got so many laws onto everything, and they got so many ways of raising money without nobody seeing it, that every one is suffering from pocket-book starvation and don't know it. Oh, well, it's a long road with no hill on it!"

"That's right," Bill nodded. "What's that?"

"You mean that steamer? Why, she's locking up the canal. Haven't you seen the locks yet? Gracious! Come on with me. I'll show you something as is something. We got the ship-locks here, and the business of letting ships down to Lake Huron and up to Lake Superior is something nobody wants to miss."

He led them down the street around a corner and through a beautiful park to the American Soo Canal locks. The steamer which they had seen at the foot of the street, moving up, was already in one of the locks

and rising up and up, foot by foot, as they approached it.

"Now, that's a sight!" their informant told them. "I never get over that. They're raising about nineteen feet to day. You see, the wind shifts around on the lakes, and when it blows east that piles the water up at Duluth and shoals it here; but let it blow the other way, and you see the Soo out there just a rearing. You see the water pouring down the canal here and coming up to the top of the gates and pretty near flooding us out here. Say, but don't that steamer loom up there! Look at it! There, she's back-flowed. See, they — they're opening the gate up there! They don't lose any time going through here. I tell you this place is a wonder! It beats any other canal in the world—I forget how much. Suez Canal—all those places. By George, now I've gone and done it."

"Why, what's the matter?" Bill exclaimed, as the man stopped in confusion at a sudden thought.

"Why, my wife wanted I should be sure and come right back with those clothes-pins she wanted; but I got to looking at that new twenty-two rifle. But say, I'll get you a report by the Chief of Engineers of the United

States Army that 'll tell you all about this business here."

He bounded away and hailed a man in blue uniform, who pointed down the lock toward the superintendent's office. In three minutes the man was back again with a paper-bound pamphlet in his hand.

"Here 'tis, boys. You look through this an' you'll find it is interestin' as a detective story, you sure will. S'long—sorry my wife wants those clothes-pins—been wantin' 'em for a week."

Away he went, leaving the pamphlet in Miles's hands, the two boys looking after him considerably amused.

"Let's look at it," Bill suggested, and they sat down on one of the green park benches at the edge of the concrete walk.

"Nothing but a lot of tables and figures and things," Miles remarked, scornfully, as he glanced at them.

"Well, what's our arithmetic for if it isn't to understand figures and tables and such things?" Bill asked, pausing to look at a mass of figures with various captions above them. "Look here—'East and West Bound Traffic'—that tells how much freight goes through here in a year."

"That's so; and what kinds—see that! East bound—copper, grain, building-stone, flour, iron ore, pig-iron, lumber, wheat, general merchandise, passengers!" Miles read, reaching to see the better. "Why, look at that—37,958 passengers!"

"That means Canadian and American canals. Why, there must be two canals!"

They raised their eyes and looked across the river, and, sure enough, they could see two ships inland beyond the river. They knew that that was a canal there, too.

"That's just the east bound," Miles explained. "Say, notice that! They send copper and grain and wheat east—and iron ore, too; but going west they send coal, manufactured iron, and salt. And look at the passengers—41,993 passengers going west and 37,900 going east! Some never come back!"

"Perhaps they come back by train?" Bill suggested.

"No, not all of them. You see, people are still moving West—it's the 'Go West, young man' going. Say, look at that summary down below there—they sent 36,429,399 tons east and 17,047,817 tons west!"

"That's the grain and wheat and iron ores. Look at that! There's 40,000,000 bushels

of grain and 97,000,000 bushels of wheat! Isn't that funny, there—they sent west 1,450 bushels of grain against all that coming east, and 125 barrels of flour."

"Like as not that 1,450 bushels was seed; you know they're experimenting all the time with seeds. We learned that in the physical-geography class—"

"Look at that—$29,492,196.35 paid for freight; that was on 53,477,216 tons of freight. Why, that's less than a dollar a ton; that can't mean for putting it on board and taking it off—"

"Yes, it means that, too—see there! Transportation charges, including loading and unloading, on freight passing through the Sault Ste. Marie canals—both sides!"

"It doesn't seem possible!"

"Well, I suppose one of those ships carry an awful lot; let's see—how much—"

They turned the pages over back and forth, pausing to make exclamations.

"Look at that—estimated value of total freight passing the canals, $595,019,844. Iron ore is worth $107,000,000!"

"Yes, but look at general merchandise—$207,000,000!"

"That's so—here we are! 'Dimensions of

Vessels.' Whew! There's 12,000 to 13,000 tons of cargo—"

"They get $7,000 or $8,000 a trip, then—those big fellows!"

"If they make enough trips, then they do make money; interest on the investment, too!"

"Say, look at this! This tells how much freight-ships carried, at once and in a season. Let's see; it shows different years, too. Now look at that; in 1900 the largest cargo was 8,462 tons, and in 1911 it was 12,544 tons—"

"Yes; but look at that! The largest cargo was carried in 1907. Why, I thought ships kept growing larger all the while!"

"Let's ask that man. Say, Mr. Customs Official, why don't they have such large ships now as four or five years ago?"

"Oh, they have the same old ships, but they don't load them so heavy. You see, they got stuck in the canals and had to wait till the water got deeper on the sills. They lost a trip or two that way, and they carried more in a season when they didn't load so heavy—that's down in the tables there."

"Thank you."

"Yes, but that doesn't show in the tables. There's a ship carried 339,151 tons in a year,

and she ran 43,296 miles; that doesn't look like much delay."

"Perhaps she was just lucky, and others were held up; modern business doesn't depend much on luck. 'Take the safe and sure side,' is the way they do things now—"

"That's right," a seedy old man who happened to be passing slowly nodded to them. "We didn't know that when I was younger. We used to start early and dodge the ice, and we used to travel late and dodge the gales. I did that; I had five steamers one time. I laughed at them when they said they wouldn't insure me. I said my captains and my crews didn't need insurance! I never knew what became of two steamers, and two that I did keep track of—one is up on Thunder Cape in two hundred feet of water; the other's down on The Ducks, off Manitoulin. I sold the other one. I live on what I got. I learned my lesson; one of my boys was on one of those ships that we never heard from—not a splinter! Don't you go taking any chances!"

Then the old man went thumping along the cement pavement, his head nodding and his heels scuffling along.

The boys looked after him till he disappeared beyond the gate house. Then they

turned to the pamphlet again—"Appendix M. M., Report of Colonel Townsend."

"Remember what that sailor down at Sarnia said about the sailing-ships all disappearing?" Miles asked. "Wonder if this tells anything about sailing-ships?"

"Here it is!" Bill exclaimed. "'Statement of Commerce through both American and Canadian Canals for Each Year from the First Opening in 1855. Why, that's when the canal was opened!"

"They had another canal before that; I just got a glimpse of it— Just a minute," Miles declared. "There! I told you so—'Historical Notes.' See that! 'The first canal was built on the Canadian side of the river by the Northwest Fur Company in 1797–98. The lock was 38 feet long and 8 feet 9 inches wide' —big enough for a big rowboat. That new lock they're building now is 1,350 feet long, 80 feet wide, and 24.5 feet deep. See that? There's some difference!"

"I should say so! Here's about those steamers and sailboats. There were 149 steamers and 44 sailing-vessels went through the first year, 1855—more steamers than sailboats then."

"Yes, but in 1857 only 184 steamers and 192 sailing-vessels went through."

"There were more sailboats all along till 1864. See that—366 steamers, 1,045 sailing-vessels. Next year it fell to 602 sailing-vessels and 366 steamers. Wonder what made that drop."

"That was in the Civil War times—1864. You know, most of the Northern armies came from these states through here—Indiana, Michigan, Ohio. Wars hurt business by taking away the best workers, the best young men. That's probably the reason for the drop in lake commerce in '65 and '66. It began to pick right up after 1866. See that? That was till 1873, when there were 968 steamers and 1,519 sailing-vessels. My! what made that drop in 1874? There were 901 steamers and 833 sailing-vessels that year."

"That was the year after the panic of 1873. You know we read in the history what hard times they had in 1873?" Bill suggested.

"That's so; but there were only sixty-seven less steamers, and there were almost seven hundred less sailing-vessels. I don't see what kept the steamers going?"

"Well, I think probably the owners of the steamers were more progressive and more ambitious than the owners of the sailing-

vessels. They managed to get along somehow when the hang-behinds failed or had to stop running. You see, every once in a while Nature has a shake-down—there are hard times, famine, epidemics, panics, and all that sort of thing. Of course the weaker, less capable ones go under."

"That's so; but look at that! In 1876—1,735 steamers and 684 sailing-vessels."

"It's just as I said," Bill remarked. "The progressive steamboat-owners recovered from the panic first. Look down here, in 1892, 1893. That's that other panic year, you know. Sailing-ships slacked up in 1891, and then boomed in 1893—2,405 up to 3,324, and then dropped down to 2,955. Steamers fell from 8,737 to 8,379 in 1893. Then they jumped to over 10,000 in 1894. Look at the 1903 panic; that whipped the sailing-vessels. Steamers went from 17,000 in 1902 to 14,000 in 1903, and 12,000 in 1904. There were a lot of followers in steamboats in those days, so they went down the way the sailing-vessels did in 1873. Then look how they caught it in 1907 again—17,000 to 12,500. See how fast the sailing-vessels have passed out—4,776 in 1899, and then down a bit and up to 4,482 in 1901, then right down, down to 2,994 in

1904, up to 3,200 in 1905—that was just a kind of dying effort, the way trees blossom out the year before they die. It got down to 954 in 1909; but in 1911 it came up to 1,800. I suppose they count tow-barges with little sails sailing-vessels now; but say, I never knew before that you could read history in columns of figures; that's all they are!"

"Yes; and that isn't all the history in that table, either. Look at 'Wheat,'" Miles suggested.

"That's so; 74 bushels in 1859, 223 in 1861. Then no more—there's the Civil War again. They were sending it south on the Mississippi then, and on the railroads to the armies. In 1870 there were 49,700 bushels. Then look at it grow! But see! There are the short-crop years, when the crop failed!

"And the big-crop years, too—1887, 1896, 1902, 1909!"

"Of course, those weren't all different steamers and sailing-vessels going through," Bill recalled. "That was just the number of times boats went through the locks here. Steamers must have been fewer than sailing-vessels a long time after they went through oftener. One steamer would go through four

or five times as often as a sailing-vessel. Probably stormy seasons and bad weather held the sailing-vessels up right along."

"Probably. Here's something ought to interest you. See, saw-logs and pulp rafted down the St. Marys Rapids."

"Down those rifts—the Soo? That's so. In 1892, the year before the panic, they sent down 39,500,000 feet, board measure, in twenty-two rafts. Say, what rafts they must have been! Some of them had 2,000,000 feet in, at that rate. They towed them down the lakes with big tugs. I remember hearing log-drivers tell about that at Hinckley. Right after the panic they stopped rafting to amount to anything—they lost too many rafts breaking up in storms. The last raft went through in 1907; just one raft that year. I guess the only rafting on the Great Lakes now is from Garden Island at Kingston. They run rafts from there down the St. Lawrence, I've heard say. Say, just look at that! To make the first canal Congress voted 750,000 acres of Michigan timber-lands. And see here! The canal and locks cost $1,000,000. Think of it! That Michigan pine timber went for $1.25 an acre, and now it's all gone. You know that town we landed at down on Lake

Michigan? They killed the goose that laid the golden egg."

"Well, they wanted to sell the feathers, probably," Miles suggested, sagely. "Probably wanted to make a pillow out of it."

The boys laughed and closed the pamphlet to watch a huge steamer about five hundred feet long come warping into the lock. On the bridge stood a tall, slender man with a gray mustache, a pair of brass marine glasses in his hand. Up forward a young, smooth-shaven man stood with his eyes turned on the lock and leaning far out to watch the sides of the big ship.

"Get the lines out!" came from the bridge.

"Run out those lines, there!" the young man ordered.

Shining steel ropes were hurried out to iron snubbing-posts, and on the deck of the steamer, a minute later, donkey-engines began to steam and puff. The lines came up taut, and as the steamer came into the lock clear of the gates under the stern the young man shouted:

"Hold 'er!"

"Hold 'er!" a voice answered from the deck.

Under the stern the gates swung shut; and as they closed the whole mass, with a sudden

quiver, began to sink down in the lock. A photographer yelled:

"Get your pictures took!"

The captain on the bridge, the mate on the forecastle, and the crew in sight visibly straightened up and glanced around uneasily. Out of the quarters came running other members of the crew to line up along the rail. The photographer, with a huge camera, and a great cloth over his head, ducked and waved his arms.

"All right. I got 'er!" he shouted; and the steamer moved on out of the lock into the canal.

"The *J. P. Morgan*—she held the mileage record for seven years," the boys heard a man remark near by. "She steamed 43,296 miles in 1906, and carried 13,800 tons one trip—that was another record. They don't build them as large as they used to; but when the new canal is done you'll see some busting big boats up here on the lakes. They found that with these locks—the Poe and the Weitzel locks—they had so many delays and waits for enough water to get over the sills that it paid to make more speed and carry less cargo. That's why you see fewer built of the 12,000 to 14,000 ton boats."

Suddenly the boys noticed a faint chill in the air, and a kind of gloom settled over the scene.

"Why," Bill exclaimed, looking at his watch, "it's after six o'clock! But feel the air! It must be a breeze off of Lake Superior. It's almost cold, and here it is midsummer."

Then they left the famous locks and returned to their boat; and on the following morning, bright and early, they ran up into the Canadian canal to the locks. They joined a great lake cargo steamer going up, and with a loop around a steel head and pike-pole in hand they rose with the water till they came up to the level of Lake Superior. The steamer moved out ahead of them, and as they followed, keeping clear of the swirling waters from her propeller, they swung out into the greatest of the Great Lakes—Superior.

XXII

THE WILD NORTH SHORE

WHEN they had cleared the canal they drew away from the villages at the Soo. Ahead of them was a widening bay, and when they had rounded Point aux Pins, before them toward the northwest opened the blue distances of Whitefish Bay, where the shores were far away and where the lonesome breadths of Lake Superior began to make themselves felt.

The shores were wooded with scattered farms even before they were out of sight of the Soo; and Bill, who was well acquainted with the wild lands, instantly discovered clear evidences of the struggle of men against wilderness.

The country was like the Lake Huron islands. There were signs of sawmills along the American side, and cut-over lands on the Canadian side. The wooded height of Gros Cap guarded the little bay at the foot of

Whitefish Bay. As they swung along into the widening waters the motor-boat began to lift and fall to a long ground-swell. Deep in Goulais Bay they could see houses and little fields, and later they saw Batchawana Bay encircled by farms, surrounded by the woods.

Hardly had they run out of the Whitefish Bay into the vast expanse of Lake Superior when they felt its chill under the warm summer sun. The lower lakes had not felt like this. The air was cold, and the water looked cold. A tinge of gray and of gloom was over the lake.

Along shore, as they steered up the coast, they found themselves opposite a stony, wooded shore broken only by occasional sand beaches, against which the dead sea broke with slow-heaving and long-bursting roars. Looking at the timber, Bill recognized the familiar "skinned country." The soft woods had been nearly all culled out, while what remained was scattered hard wood and second growth. The little home clearings were now miles apart. On the hills appeared larger and larger patches of green timber—spruce which grew on places too steep to be conveniently harvested.

"Why," Bill exclaimed at last, "this looks just like real woods!"

A few minutes later, looking at the beach with the glasses, he uttered a cry of astonishment. There was a bear and her two cubs.

"It's a real wilderness!" he exclaimed. "And it's only thirty or forty miles from the Soo!"

For mile after mile they saw the stones and bushes of old clearings, with no sight of cabin or house. They picked out points and creeks and hills by their names on the chart and the looks of the land.

"We'll stop in Agawa River to-night," Bill declared, as they swung out of the lake into the little bay and ran up the Agawa, a black-water stream. On the river-bank, a few rods up, was a small brier-grown clearing, and there they landed.

"My, but it feels wild!" Miles exclaimed, looking around him with awe. The trees were not large, but they grew in dense masses, almost like thickets, and when Bill went ashore he saw on the sands the hoof-prints of a deer —one of the few not yet driven out of the country by the migration of moose from the northwest. There was a blazed trail leading from the cabin up the river; and in the cabin,

which was not locked, were skin-stretchers—some of them for skins five feet long and fifteen inches or so across the shoulders. Besides these there were mink and muskrat and marten and fisher stretchers. Looking at the large stretchers, Bill at last muttered, in an awed voice:

"They're wolf-boards, Miles. This is a wolf country!"

Then they realized that they were in a genuine wilderness, a land of bears and deer and wolves—especially of wolves. To Bill's mind the fact that it was a wolf country made it seem wilder than had the moose down in Lake Huron on Manitoulin Island.

The trapper's cabin had been used only the winter before, as Bill could tell by the looks of the old stove and the newness of the skin-stretchers.

"I hadn't any idea this was such a wild country!" Bill repeated, over and over again. It was hard to realize that so near the great gateway of the Lakes, the Soo, there was such savage desolation.

"We'd better carry our guns when we go ashore after this," Bill remarked, when they saw that Gyp, instead of romping back and forth, remained close at their heels and sniffed

the ground suspiciously. He had not acted like this down on Lake Huron. Gyp was no coward, but he was a sensible dog and chose discretion rather than valor.

Bill cast his flies from the deck of the motor-boat, and as they fluttered down a trout shot clear out of water to seize the stretcher-fly. The fish weighed nearly a pound when Miles dipped it up in a landing-net. Miles caught two more, which, with the first, made enough for all three to eat.

Away out in the lake, so far that it was like a blue cloud, was Caribou Island, and northerly from that was another ridge, Michipicoten Island.

"Let's go out there," suggested Miles, suddenly venturesome; and as he spoke they headed for the island, leaving the lake-shore behind them. Little by little the mass resolved itself into wooded land with jagged rocks and evergreen wilderness, a place like the lake-shore which they were leaving. Through the glasses they saw a lighthouse, but they came to the island near the eastern end, where the chart showed Cozens Harbor. Entering the harbor, they found a wild land, with only an old shanty on the shore.

Here they cast anchor as night came down.

They felt the loneliness of the lake more than ever before. This was the real wilderness. An owl called from up the ridge, and it was answered by another one from a distance, a raucous, vibrant note, quite in keeping with the appearance of that stony, bristly land.

Gyp seemed to feel the solemnity of the place as much as did the two youths. He whined and whistled and stuck his ears up eagerly, and yet with doubtful sniffing, as if he knew of things going on that the boys did not know about. He seemed relieved when they went down into the cabin and lighted up.

The boys did not feel like going to sleep, so they read for an hour, and then they heard a sound which never fails to stir the blood. Over the wilderness, through the timber, floating and rolling down to the water and across the water to their cabin, came the long-drawn howl of a wolf. At the sound Gyp uttered a half-squeal, and the boys started up from their places, surprised and shivering. It was the voice of a desolate land crying in the night —a cry at which all other creatures stop and listen.

Bill and Miles turned out the light and went up on deck. The echoes of the howl left the birds fluttering on their roosts, and through

the woods they could hear things moving, breaking twigs and rustling branches. Then they heard a stone fall, rattling down some rocky face, as if it had been dislodged by the vibration of the cry.

When at last they turned in for the night they had in their minds a picture which they would long remember of these miles of stone-bound coast. During the night they were awakened, now by the call of an owl, again by the splash of something in the near waters, and then by the bark of a fox and by a low rumbling which they could not identify.

When in the morning they swung down out of the anchorage and out into the open lake again, the water was smooth as oil, but heaving like the unresting sea. They turned up the coast on their way to Port Arthur to deliver the boat to its owner.

"If we only had our camping-outfit and skiff we could camp along here all we wanted to!" Bill exclaimed.

"Well, we would have to sleep on shore, then, with those wolves!"

"That's so," Bill nodded, "but this is summer, and there isn't much danger this time of year. It is in February and March, when times are hard and food scarce, that wolves

grow desperately hungry and hunt even men."

Watching ahead for rocks, which came perilously near the surface, they drove along up the coast, looking at the wave-line beaten against the shore twenty feet above the level of the now placid water. Most of the time the water was deep and dark under them, but sometimes, as they looked ahead, they saw the water suddenly paling and becoming a bright, beautiful green, and then they knew that they were nearing the top of a submarine peak. Once, straight ahead of them, Miles saw the water suddenly suck down and leave a rounded head bare in the midst of the low waves. A moment later the water coiled up over the stone, and, putting the wheel hard down, they cleared the dangerous rock.

They rounded Gargantua Light, named, as they had learned, from a legend that in the early days trappers had encountered a glutton, or wolverine, called Gargantua by the old-time French. They saw a white flag on a stick lashed to a chunk of wood flashing ahead of them to mark a net sunk deep there in the water. According to the chart, part of that shore ran down into water 378 feet deep right alongside of rocks that were just

awash. Yet this part of the chart was curiously deficient in figures. Other parts were covered with figures showing the depth of water. It was some time before they realized that no part of this coast had ever been surveyed, but that was the fact.

Their direct route was by way of the east end of Michipicoten Island, so they cut across about thirty miles toward the blue shore-line which they saw in brilliant mirage. They passed close to the island, but, as they had plenty of time before night, they went on to the mainland. They were prepared for what they found there by the shore along Agawa neighborhood.

It was wilderness, and when they rounded a stone point into a deep, narrow bay they were not surprised to find it merely a jagged dent in a tree-grown coast. They saw a family of young mink playing on one little sand beach under some brush, and on a boulder sat a fine red fox, with his tail curled around his fore-paws, looking at the motor-boat with sharp, alert gaze, which became animated and sniffing when Gyp walked along the deck and returned the look with interest.

Then night came, and with the dark again came the rising voices of the wilderness; but

there were no wolf howls this time, only owls and foxes, and along shore the splashing of tiny waves. The barometer had been falling, and in the morning there were clouds and a wind. After breakfast, when the boys steered out into the open lake again, they found that there was some sea running, with occasional whitecaps.

There were dark clouds away down in the west, but they were so far away that the boys scarcely noticed them. The little breeze, however, seemed to kick up an astonishingly large sea, and the motor-boat rolled and pitched, while along shore the waves flung themselves against the broken walls of stone which held forth between the harbors. They had gone only a few miles when Bill, looking down into the southwest, discovered a curious flickering of the waters and a gray cloud that seemed to be well inside of the horizon.

As he watched he saw that the cloud was coming nearer, but it was some time before he realized its significance, and then the flash of whitecaps dragging under that veiling gray mass startled him with the truth of the matter.

"Here comes a squall!" he yelled. "Stow that loose tackle below!"

Miles jumped up, and for an instant looked around him in surprise. Then he started to carry down the chairs and odds and ends that had accumulated on the deck during the fair-weather traveling. Before he had half the stuff down, however, the storm was upon them. The wind struck the boat quartering on the bow, as Bill turned the bow to face the gale. A wave leaped and broke over the side, and the next instant they were staggering in the welter of waves and wind. They could not see a hundred feet in any direction, and neither knew just where there was a safe harbor near them on that shore, whose rocks now seemed more menacing than ever.

Bill, holding the boat, looked at the chart. There were plenty of places along it of attractive name—Pukaso River, Pilot Harbor, Otter Cover—a mile-deep cut—Richardson's Harbor. Some names were printed on, and others were written with a pen. As they looked they saw that they could not fight the storm in that boat out there in the open, especially if it lasted any length of time.

"We've just got to find a harbor!" Bill shouted above the din of waves and wind. "We've come above Julia River quite a ways.

There was a big point we were coming around when she hit us."

"Into Pukaso!" Miles shouted back.

"I guess so. Anyhow, the wind right here must be kind of along shore, and not straight on it!"

The first blast of the storm gone by, there were longer, higher waves; and, watching his chance, Bill brought the motor-boat about, and, guided by the feeling of the storm and the lie of the land, he steered quartering down the wind, and then, suddenly, ahead of him he saw a tumult of waves jumping and falling, while the wind blew the white water from the tops of breaking seas.

The motor-boat leaped high and then plunged down again, and as it went down Bill had a terrible thought that they might be over one of those submerged peaks. He listened for a crash, but he heard only the heavy waves hurling themselves against the rocks to the starboard, and he felt only the back-wash. Then the boat slid down the front slope of a long wave and shot out into level waters.

"We're safe!" exclaimed Bill. "It's a harbor!"

Sure enough, as they drove through the

rain at slow speed they found themselves coasting along a lee shore with little sand beaches, and woods that came down almost to the water's edge, and moss-grown rocks, showing that waves never came there out of the open lake.

Long after they were free from the wind and waves they heard the surf breaking against the shore; but as they ran inland the sound died behind them, and they could hear only the wind blowing through the trees and the falling of the rain.

It was more than a squall; it was a long gale. The day was tedious, waiting for the storm to go by, and when they had anchored away back in the bay, in a little nook of a cove, they became restless and uneasy, and then Bill suggested:

"Let's go for a walk?"

"Let's!" Miles cried. "I like storms, except on the open sea."

So they put on oilskins and went ashore with Gyp. They carried a carbine rifle and a light shotgun in case they should meet any of the big beasts that they knew lived in those deep, wilderness woods.

As they left the skiff, drawn far up on the beach and tied to a stout little tree, Bill

noticed an opening in the brush. They went to it and found that a camp had stood there. Fire had burned it down, and green weeds were starting up among the black coals. There were tracks as large as a cow's there, as if some moose might have come to eat the ashes or salt. An old trap, the head of a dull ax, a file, and some wire showed that it had been a trapper's cabin, and this made Bill look around.

"There must be a trail that leads away from here somewhere," he said. "There are always trails leading away from these old cabins. We could follow it back."

Sure enough, they found a plain trail at the edge of the opening, and Bill, after looking at his compass to make sure of his direction, entered the woods, with Miles behind him and Gyp making tentative excursions of a few yards in various directions ahead of him.

It was thick timber, the thickest Bill had ever seen outside of an Adirondack balsam swamp or an Arkansas cane-brake. The trees were spruce and balsam, but small and old. The trail had been cut out, little trees cut away close to the ground by an ax-stroke, and fallen trees cut off. The trail led up a stony ridge and over a bare stone back half

a mile from the old camp, and there in the woods just beyond was a notch cut in the side of a spruce-tree, and in the notch was a rabbit-skull. Hanging from a pole near by was a sprung steel trap.

"We're on a trap line!" Bill exclaimed. "But I don't understand that trap hanging there—there was something in the trap. See that! It's a mink or a marten, and there's its skull on the ground and leg-bone in the trap."

Soon they came to another trap which was not sprung, but rested in its notch, rusty and abandoned. There were traps every few hundred yards, many that were sprung, the bones lying there in mute evidence that the victims had not been touched. The boys wondered why the trapper had not returned to take care of his furs. The wondering made them lonesome and nervous; but they pressed on along the line, learning new things about trapping and line-making. They found places where the blazes on the trees were cut cornerways, and, circling around one of these trees, found that down the valley of a brook to the right were traps set for mink, the odd blazes marking their places.

They jumped rabbits, but for a time the

rabbits escaped them. Then Miles shot one, and they carried it with them. They saw a score of rabbits and as many partridges. After killing three rabbits and four partridges they decided that they had all the game they needed. Now they were just exploring along the trap line, which led like a game-trail along stone mountains, through deep beds of caribou-moss, and into thick masses of small evergreen timber. Occasionally they passed a tall paper-birch-tree, with great sheets of the bark dangling and dripping.

The boys were so interested in following the wood's trail that they did not notice how far they had gone nor how late it was getting until, suddenly, as they were tramping along, keeping always to the trail which was so plainly blazed through the timber, they noticed that the light was growing dim.

"Why, it must be the clouds are thickening up!" Bill exclaimed, when he discovered the fall of the gloom.

"It's after seven o'clock," Miles exclaimed, looking at his watch; and, sure enough, night was at hand.

"We've been tramping six or seven hours," Bill exclaimed. "Why, we've come an awful way on this trail — at the rate we've been

walking, ten or twelve miles, anyhow. Whew! We're in for a night of it."

"Where do you suppose this trail goes to?" Miles exclaimed. "There must be somebody uses it."

"Only in the winter," Bill said. "And not last winter. No trapper would leave his traps strung out that way if something wasn't the matter. There must be a camp along this trail ahead of us somewhere, but perhaps it's an awful way. We've got to stay out to-night. We'll go along and find some place to build a little brush camp. I wish we had some salt for those birds and rabbits."

They started on again, Bill trying to pick a good camp-site; but nothing just to his taste appeared for ten or fifteen minutes, and then the trail dipped down the side hill and went out around a point of rock.

"This looks as if it were coming to a lake," Bill almost whispered; and Gyp, dejected by the rain, plodded along behind them, sniffing and raising his head questioningly.

"It is a lake!" Bill exclaimed, looking ahead and seeing a gleam of water.

Sure enough, they came down to a pond where the outlet brook which they had followed up ran out. Here, built of stones, was

a cubby, and in the old trap was the withered carcass of a fine fisher, worth twenty dollars at least, Bill thought. A hundred yards farther along the trail, in the thick timber off the little lake and out of the wind, they came to a tepee, a camp in the midst of the woods. The camp was built of poles like the tepees of Western Indians, but, instead of being covered with skins, this camp was covered with sheets of birch bark.

There was a large pile of firewood near by, and an ax half buried in a balsam-tree. The head was rusted, but the blade was bright and sharp when Bill drew it out.

In the camp, which was dry except where the rain had dripped in at the opening overhead left for the smoke, they found old blankets, a sheaf of stretchers for fur, traps hanging from the poles, some .22-caliber cartridges, and jerked meat. Best of all, for their immediate purposes, they found salt in a dry tin, sugar, tea, coffee, and other things, all in tin cans resting on a forked-stick table out of the wet and off the ground. There was tobacco, and in a bark cup were knives, forks, and spoons, just as the trapper had left them.

But for the appearance that things had

A TRAPPER'S BARK TEPEE

not been disturbed for months, it was as if the trapper or trappers might step in again any minute.

Bill and Miles went to work in a hurry to fix things for the night. They brought in wood for the fire, which they built on the stone under the opening overhead. They started the fire, and the smoke curled up and out the hole. It was soon too warm in the tepee, but they broiled two rabbits and a partridge and congratulated themselves on their good fortune.

Quite thoughtlessly they had wandered far back into the ancient trapping-grounds of the North. They knew that they were in the old Hudson Bay fur country, or at least within the edge of the wilderness. They would have been quite comfortable had it not been for the feeling of loneliness which they had whenever they noticed some new sign that the trapper had only just stepped out—and never returned.

XXIII

ON THE OLD TRAP LINE

AS they sat there in the light of their flickering fire they looked at the poles which led up to the peak of the conical tent of paper birch. The smoke, they noticed with some wonderment, curled up and around and straight out at the opening where the poles met. Then they saw that the entrance to the tent was faced by a sheet of bark, a kind of screen, and that the draft of air which came under this screen fed the fire from underneath and then drew up as if through an air-chimney. The boys could see then why the tepee of the Indian was not full of smoke—the screen or curtain between the door and the fire prevented that.

They could hear the wind sighing through the tops of the stiff evergreens, but it was a far-away sound. They could hear things walking out in the near-by woods, but Gyp did not seem to pay any attention to them,

so they knew it must be their own imagination. Gyp sat and stared into the fire, nodding sleepily. When he lost his balance and almost fell over, he would stiffen up and shake his head. Like the boys, Gyp did not like to go to sleep there in that lonely camp on the trap line which had been left unfollowed a year or, perhaps, two years before.

After a time, however, their fatigue drove all three to curl down on the thick, dry balsams. The fire warmed the bark tent to the farthest corner, and when they piled a little wood on it the new flames flickered on the pale bark and peeled poles. They soon slept.

They slept till the fire died down and let cold air come whirling around them, and then they sat up and watched the coals spring into new flames around some of that wood which had been sawed and split by unknown hands. It was a long night, and Bill, looking back into his own experiences, compared it with the nights when he was camping on the great Mississippi, the broad river flowing past on one side, and the wilderness of gum and cypress behind him.

When dawn came the two boys slept on until Gyp sat up, stretching himself, pawing

Bill's gray woolen shirt to wake him up. Bill found the fire almost out. By the time he had its blaze cheerfully burning Miles too turned out, and they went down to the lake to wash.

It had stopped raining, but the gray clouds were driving before the gale like birds, as the short, steep ridges of stone deflected the straight winds off the lake this way and that. The water of the little lake was so clear that they could see the rocky bottom. Up the shore, hardly fifty yards away, a moose was feeding on water-weeds growing in the silt and sand. It was a big bull moose with broad horns covered with huge nobs and beautiful gray velvet. The brute turned and looked at them.

"Be ready to run!" Bill gasped, for his mind was full of the stories told of the ferocity of the bull moose. But the moose, after a casual scrutiny, turned and went on feeding; and, while the boys washed, the moose ate, a strange campmate in the fellowship of the woods.

Returning to the tepee, the boys broiled for breakfast another of the birds they had hung from the poles. Then, taking their weapons, they were ready again for the trail.

"We'd better go back to the boat," Bill said, but he looked longingly beyond the tent where the path continued its course through the woods, saying, "I'd like to go over every rod of this line."

"So would I," Miles agreed; but they knew better than to do it.

"Anyhow," Bill said, "we've had a look at the backwoods. You don't get that coming along the shore and not going back from water. I know now what they mean when they call this the 'Fir Country'; it's the balsam firs that name it."

So they turned to retrace their steps. They followed down the trail to the foot of the lake and crossed the outlet. Beyond the outlet Bill saw the blazes on the tree-trunks leading away into the woods up the ridge-side. As he went along he hesitated once or twice and looked around him, but he said nothing. Then they ran into a flock of young partridges and killed six—enough to last a day or two. Since Bill had brought some salt and they had matches and drinking-cups, they felt reasonably well equipped.

"It's just like being a *coureur de bois!*" Bill cried. "This is real woods-running! I have not been in the woods so much before—not

since I was lost in a cane-brake. If it wasn't for these blazed trees we'd have to go by compass. Let's see!"

He took out his compass to look at the directions. It seemed all right, and yet Bill kept feeling as if something was different, something was wrong, on that old, well-blazed trap line through the balsam firs.

There were open spans over rock so bare that even spruce could not grow; but on the far side of the opening they would pick up a blaze. Across their trail were runways, and in these runways they stopped to look at the huge footprints of moose and caribou. They went through a gap in a ridge, and there all trails became one—moose, caribou, rabbit, fox, fisher; all the woods creatures followed one narrow pathway through the gap in the glacier-rounded rock.

There were three traps right along that scant sixty rods, and two of them had been sprung. The third was set, but the jaws were rusted, and the chain under its cover of moss was a mere streak of rust.

So they tramped along, Gyp keeping close to the two, sniffing, with ears erect and an expression of wonder and doubt on his face. He could not understand such a land as that,

with creatures the like of which he had never smelled before. And then, suddenly, Gyp made a wild dash into a thicket on their left, yelping and snapping. Out of the thicket sprang a gray animal, spitting like a huge cat and retreating up a maple-tree. By the time the boys had collected their wits Bill recognized the animal.

"It's a lynx!" he cried, adding, as Miles threw up his gun: "Don't shoot it! What's the use? The pelt is no good in summer, and this is his own land."

So after looking into the moon eyes of the animal and noticing the tufted ears and the short tail, they passed on along the trail, leaving it to come down again unhurt. Rabbits were everywhere, and partridges. There were two partridges four times as large as any Bill had ever before seen; but he recognized them as spruce partridges, stupid birds which one can catch with a wire noose on the end of a pole. Bill shot their heads off with his rifle, and added them to their supply of food.

So they tramped for hours while Bill watched the country keenly. He could not make out what had happened to make him uneasy, nor did he understand till long after noon, when they were looking for the site

of the burned cabin, and came to a little opening.

"Here we are!" Bill exclaimed; and then he stopped with a gasp of amazement, for there was another little birch-bark tepee, but not the one that they had left. This one was on a little knoll, and before the entrance, held erect by stones, was a log cross. When they looked into the little bark building they knew what it meant. There, across the floor, was a long, low mound, and as the boys took off their hats they realized why the line had not been run, why the traps had not been taken up. This was the trapper's grave, and on a flat notch in the cross the boys read the inscription:

HERE LIES
JAMES WILSON, 58 Years.
Found dead by his son Will
in this camp

There was a stove in this camp, but it was moved to one side to make way for the grave, and Bill explained to Miles that the ground had probably been frozen so hard that they had to make the grave in the bark cabin.

It was some time before the shock of that lonely grave gave place to consideration of

their own condition, and then Miles asked, with a sudden doubt in his voice:

"Where are we? We didn't see this going in!"

"I was just thinking about that," Bill answered, slowly. "I thought this trail didn't feel right, but I forgot to look for our tracks. There must have been a fork near that other camp, and we took the wrong turn."

"Then we're lost!" Miles gasped. "We can't—"

"We're all right!" Bill snapped. "We'll sit down and plan. Let's look at the compass—that 'll show what we've done. If there'd been sunshine we would have noticed which way we were going. Look, we've been coming almost due north instead of going west, the way we ought to have gone. Well, we've got to go back now."

Bill's hurried, nervous manner and sharp tone did not reassure Miles, as he glanced to right and left among the dark shadows of the thick-standing trees.

As he looked, Miles thought of the trappers' camp with the grave in it, dug when the snow was deep. He shivered at the thought of the man who had died there, shut in by those stiff-limbed, needle-leaved trees. He

caught his breath as if the trees were suffocating him, and he stumbled over a slender trunk which had fallen across the trail. Trees to the right, to the left, before him and behind him—they seemed to march, they seemed to coil and writhe, and yet they were as still, quiet, and enduring as the stones on which they grew. The air was close, down there among the dark stems, and Miles found himself gasping for the open—for some place where he could see a long wave, for sight of the dark blue waters of the deep lake, with its rolling waves and breaking caps of white. How near home the lake-shore seemed, as he stared into the thick gloom in the shade of those upright, hard-branched trees, most of them no larger around than his arm, and standing so close together that their branches barred the way, except along that narrow trail which led endlessly ahead and tracked endlessly behind them—a trail that came and went, yet did not take them to the open beach and the welcome lake.

They stood there sufficient unto themselves, paying not the least attention to the two youths who paused among them, and, almost back to back, glanced around and around, doubtful which way to go, whether ahead or

back to that terrible bark shack with its grave.

"What time is it?" Bill asked, in a hollow voice, as if he, too, were thinking of that awful depth of green timber.

"It's after one o'clock," Miles answered, his fingers trembling when he drew out the open-faced watch.

"We've been coming five hours. We can make that other camp, where we stayed, and then go back—the way we came in, you know. We turned off — somewhere. We'll — we'll have to watch out when we get back. These woods—I never saw such woods before! The stones—how dark they are!—and the ridges! Look at that ridge there, through the trees!"

It was a blunt, stony ridge on which the evergreens were growing out of the faces of precipices, and each evergreen stood as erect as there where they stood, two hundred yards from the foot of the ridge, in the midst of a swamp where the caribou-moss was almost knee-deep around the trunks of the trees.

Just a few yards away was the bark tepee, a mere patchwork among the tree-trunks, for they had retreated from it when they found what was in its shelter.

"We'd better eat something," Bill said, re-

membering some lesson that he had learned. "We'll feel better if we eat something; we've lots to eat—"

"We'll need it," gasped Miles, wiping his arm across his forehead.

Bill looked around, and they returned to the tiny opening before the camp. This was the trail they had come in on, but another plain path led down the slope of the timber, where the swamp broke away into a little valley. The path led toward a brook that was babbling and singing noisily—the only thing that could sing in that gloom.

"There's water; we'll eat there. We'll build a fire and cook something—we need something hot!"

So they built a fire and roasted two partridges. They ate the birds slowly, and little by little they found their "second courage" coming. But, for all that, they were unsmiling and pale-faced. It was a terribly serious business, being lost there in that wilderness, which extended, they knew, for hundreds of miles.

When they had eaten and Gyp had had his share they arose and stood ready to face this peril, the worst that they could imagine, and they summoned in silence each his own

courage. When they had made ready they set forth again on the back trail. They pushed ahead into the wilderness, where the stunted trees stood so close together that the boys had to squeeze between them, and where the trapper, blazing the line, had slashed the bark of line-trees every few yards. Their hands and elbows grew sticky with the balsam from broken sap-blisters, and the odor, instead of being sweet, seemed thick and smarted in their nostrils. Occasionally they crossed little opens where the rocks were bare or grew only a little moss.

Gyp acted bravely. He romped back and forth, and started rabbits out of their finds beside the trail, and flushed grouse into the limbs of the trees. He barked and yelped, as if the deep woods were friendly and pleasant. His good spirits did much to put the two boys in a better frame of mind, till, suddenly, Gyp stopped his romping and playful yelping.

His eyes started and his lips drew back from his teeth. Along his back the hair rose straight up and even leaned the wrong way; Gyp was transformed in an instant from a cheerful, playful dog into an angry one; and then, as the boys heard a far, fearsome, moan-

ing yell, Gyp cringed and shrank toward them whining and trembling with terrible fear.

Again they heard the far sound, and the two clutched at their firearms and stood with their backs to a paper-birch stump. Gyp stood quivering at their feet while they waited, as that fleeting sound increased and grew louder in volume, till they knew what it was—wolves that were hunting by day.

Merely being lost in an endless wilderness was as nothing now—forgotten in this new terror.

"Come!" Bill spoke thickly. "We must find some place we can make a fight in."

"Back on the trail—that clump of rocks!" Miles gasped.

They turned and ran back, Gyp leaping ahead of them; happily, the stones of which Miles had spoken were only a few hundred feet distant, and there was a place they could defend if attack should come. It was a huge boulder, split till it was like an A-tent, the back of the crevice being filled with stones, and the front facing a flat-rock opening, thirty or forty yards across, where the soil was too thin for trees to grow.

There they put their backs to the rock and, with their weapons ready, waited.

"We have lots of ammunition!" Bill exclaimed, as the most consoling thought.

The pack came nearer, a raging, howling chorus, racing through the stunted green timber-land, and the boys could not tell whether the wolves were on their trail or on the trail of something else. They understood that they might be in a desperate situation, and the thought made them both gather their wits and hold their courage; but it was a terrible loneliness there, as the vast wild reverberated to the howling, hunting cry of the hungry wolf pack.

It came rapidly nearer, dipping into a deep gully and then bursting up over the crest of the ridge of stone where they were intrenched. It was clear, now, that they were coming along the old trapping-line, and a moment after the great outburst the boys and Gyp heard the crashing of something running through the timber, with the pattering of countless paws mingled with a harder clattering sound.

"It's game—something with hoofs and horns!" Bill recognized.

Then they heard the attack—the snapping of teeth and the frantic lunges of the stricken creature. A minute later they saw the fight

coming through the brush, the tops of the trees shaking as the combat surged against the trunks. They saw the agitation and the springing of lithe forms down in the dark undergrowth.

Then out of the balsams into the little open surged the wolves and their quarry—a moose and scores of wolves. It was a moose with stunted, velvet horns, showing that it was not a strong moose, but one which had been injured at some time and was now unable to race or to fight with full vigor. The fight was almost over when the stricken creature stumbled out into the open, and with the pack tearing at him he struck and tossed his head and struggled on; but already they had cut his sides and flanks and were leaping at his great, thick neck, slashing it with their white fangs.

Miles threw up his gun to fire.

"The moose, Miles!" said Bill. "It's too late to save him." And Bill's shot quickly followed Miles's, putting the victim of the wolves out of his misery.

In the uproar and confusion the boys could hardly tell whether they had hit or not; but the huge animal collapsed instantly, and over him swarmed the gray wraiths of the green

timber, choking down the warm and dripping meat.

Out of the confusion surged the animals, which caught a big chunk, and sometimes they lugged the meat off to one side, and settled down upon it with contented grunts of satisfaction. Sometimes two wolves disputed possession and would fight with savage appetite for the chunk till it was gone.

In a few minutes there were a dozen wolves out of the pack gnawing at something they had salvaged. From where the moose had gone down the growls became less angry and the gutturals better-natured. One by one, with paunches distended, the wolves drew back from the feast, gorged and panting, their mouths open, to retreat a few yards and lie down, with heads up and eyes bright, their tails wagging. The wolves were content for they had eaten their fill. Where had been the great dark-skinned moose was now a frame of heavy pink bones and a dead skull, with most of the hide torn from it. Over the bones of the feast circled and flashed a number of bluebottle meat-flies, and through the timber came flitting dozens and scores of birds — meat-hawks, mostly bluejays and great Northern shrikes or butcher-birds—

who had heard the savage chase and knew that when the wolves were gorged they would find among the bones something for themselves to eat—shreds and little bits missed by the sharp noses of the wolves.

Gyp, frightened and trembling, watched the scene and waited for what his masters would do. He knew that those wolves would attack him, if they could, and he sat close. More than an hour had passed, and still the wolves did not go back into the timber.

The feast was over. The wolves had eaten all they could, and they were lying there in the open like a flock of sheep, some curled down to sleep, and some panting with full-fed contentment. Three or four which could eat no more were gnawing at bones and giving utterance to low growls. Except for that gaunt frame of pink bones it might have been a pastoral scene.

"I'm going to shoot!" Bill whispered.

At the whisper every wolf sprang up, wild and doubtful and slinking. For the time, in tearing down the quarry, they had shown just their famished hunger and blood-lust. Now they were alert and quivering and fearful. Those nearest the edge of the timber slipped under its cover. The others walked

away sidewise, looking in all directions, their lips curling and their glances sidelong. Like so many wraiths they shrank from the sunlight, and the open was deserted.

There was the frame of the moose, and there were the bluebottle-flies and the flocking meat-hawks, but the wolves were gone without a sound. It was the most uncanny spectacle the boys had ever seen, but they knew that they were saved from that band of wolves, which had fed to surfeit, and which would not hunt again for three days, probably.

"We've got to hurry!" Bill exclaimed. "I don't want to be caught out in these woods at night!"

"We'd have to climb trees!" Miles gasped.

"And make a hammock for Gyp. Poor Gyp!"

Gyp was cringing and sniffing and uttering the lowest, most nearly noiseless growls that he could. He wanted no such animals as those wolves to even suspect that he was growling, and yet he could not forbear the satisfaction of expressing his disapproval of all such doings as those he had witnessed. His eyes constantly roved around the opening, into the edge of the timber, which was alive with such creatures as he had seen in full attack.

And then Gyp turned and looked up the trail again, away from the bones, and began to whimper and whine in an entirely different tone from what he had used before. The boys, depressed with lonesomeness, felt the cold chills up and down their backbones.

"Let's go back to where we ate lunch. We can never get to the camp before dark," Bill said. "We're in no condition to travel—I'm dead tired. We can make a camp—and that's what Gyp's thinking about!"

They turned and came to where they had eaten dinner, only a little way back on the trail. They built a good fire, and they were sitting down to take a little rest before beginning to make a good brush camp, when Gyp, who had been acting as if he heard or smelled something which did not alarm him, suddenly jumped up and stared in the direction of the trail which crossed the brook—another fork of the trap line, evidently. He whistled and sniffed, and the boys seized their firearms, not knowing what might be there. As they followed the direction of his gaze with their own they heard voices, and the next minute, around a bend in the trail, appeared two men dressed in corduroy knickerbockers and belted coats. One carried a belt-ax in his hand,

with which he was cutting out branches and reblazing the trail.

"Why, hello! Here's a fire!" one of the men exclaimed; and then Gyp gave a joyful yelp, for that voice sounded very friendly there in the depths of the North Shore wilderness. The boys, caught unawares and unprepared just as they were nerving themselves for a long back-tracking, were speechless with emotion.

"By George! Two boys!" one of the men said, looking at them, adding, "Where are you camped?"

"Our boat is in a bay down by the lake. We struck the wrong trail, and came this way instead of going back to it," Bill said, frankly. "We were just going to strike back to the shanty where we stayed last night."

"Well, I declare!" the man with the ax chuckled. "I believe you're from the States?"

"Yes," Bill nodded.

"So are we," the man continued. "We're stopping down at Otter Island in our boat. Just came back to look at this country. There must be camp here somewhere. Captain McLean said it was up here. He's lightkeeper."

"Yes; it's just up here. There it is. It has a grave in it."

"Oh, that's the one where they found old man Wilson, is it? We heard about that. He and his son trapped through this country four or five years, and then his son found his father dead in camp. Some think he overworked, and some think he got his fox and wolf poison on his tobacco by mistake. Let's go look at it, Jim!"

They returned a few minutes later, and then one of them asked:

"Which way are you going? You have a boat, you say?"

"Why, yes; we came in in the storm. We thought we were at Pukaso, or somewhere along there."

"Well, you'd better go with us; we have a camp here on Twin Falls River, and we're going down to-morrow to the lake. Then we'll take you around in our launch and find your boat, if you're at Pukaso. What kind of a place are you in? Lot of log cabins and a big clearing around?"

"No, sir; it's just a little clearing where the camp was burned down sometime. The trap line starts there."

"Why, that can't be at Pukaso; the Wil-

sons started their line down on Otter Cover; that's just a little way from Otter Island, where we are. Sure! You'd best go down with us."

So the two boys and Gyp walked down the trail with the men, and within two miles they came to a narrow still water where the men had pitched their tent on a little knoll. There they asked the boys who they were with, and they were astonished to find that they were alone.

"Well, boys used to start out young when this was the great fur route of the world," one of the two said. "They used to have a long carry out of Otter Cover somewhere down to Michipicoten, where the Hudson Bay Company had a fort in the old days. So you're all alone? Well, I guess it's just as well your people don't know you're thirty miles back on the Wilson fur line. But this kind of traveling will make men of you; you'll know how to take care of yourselves after a year or two of this kind of business."

The men then told how they came from Chicago in their cruiser, and spent two or three months along the North Shore of Lake Superior camping and exploring.

"It's a great wilderness," they declared.

"It's worth seeing. How did you come to find it?"

"Why, we came up the Lakes from Black River Bay on Lake Ontario."

"What!" one of the men exclaimed, and the two exchanged looks. "You don't happen to be Bill Sayne and Miles Breton, do you?"

"Why, yes; those are our names," Bill answered, frankly; and then he asked: "How did you hear about us?"

"Well, I saw something in the papers about your tripping along the Lakes," the man answered, hesitatingly, watching the boys sharply. "People were wondering what had become of you."

"What? You don't suppose our folks are worried, do you?" Miles asked Bill. "We'd better let them know."

"Yes, you'd better let your folks know," nodded the two men. "We've a little wireless outfit on our boat. We can get the Soo all right. They're surely wondering what you have been up to. Where have you been, anyhow?"

"Who are you?" Bill asked, suddenly, as he looked the two men squarely in the face.

"I am Dr. George Wibbert; he is Judge Claven," the man answered, looking at Bill almost suspiciously.

"A judge?" Bill repeated, and then, after a moment's thought, he turned to Miles. "He could tell us all about that business. We'd better ask him?"

Miles nodded slowly.

With that Bill turned again to the men and blurted out the main features of their adventures coming up the Lakes, telling about Captain Jogues and his curious express business, and then telling of their futile efforts to return the boat to the man and quit his employ.

"Down on Lake Michigan a man told us to take the boat to Port Arthur, and that's how we came up here. We were driven in by the storm, so we took a walk while waiting for it to clear up."

"Well," Judge Claven remarked, "you won't find Captain Jogues at Port Arthur, either. You see, when he left you down on Lake Erie, he crossed to Cattaraugus Creek, and the customs officers caught him there. They've been trying to find you ever since, because—um-m—"

"Because we were in with him?"

"Yes; that's about the size of it. The papers have had a lot about it lately. They think you are hiding out."

"Well, we have been," Bill said, frankly.

"But that's because we didn't understand. I'm going right back."

"So am I!" Miles exclaimed, rising to his feet as if to start at once.

"That's the way to do it, boys. Face the music!" Judge Claven exclaimed, heartily. "But you can't start out to-night. We'll go down to-morrow, though, and by wireless I'll get in touch with the judge who is sitting on the case. He's a friend of mine."

Then the men began to talk about fishing and hunting and the game around that part of the country, and they made the boys talk about the game and fish they had seen and caught. The men seemed to think that the boys had been having about as interesting a trip up the Great Lakes as ever two boys had made anywhere. The stories the boys told about Captain Jogues amused them, too.

"He's certainly a clever rascal," the men chuckled, as if rascals were interesting people.

That night they had a bountiful meal, including pancakes and berry sauce, and the boys were glad to have something to eat besides meat.

Not knowing what to expect, the boys were far from cheerful as they sat before the fire in the open and listened while the men talked.

XXIV

THE KINDLY CUSTOMS MEN—AND HOME

JUST after break of day all were up and getting breakfast. The boys wore solemn faces, but the men cheered them up.

"Don't worry too much, boys," the men said. "Going back to face the music the way you are doing will make things better—will clear things up for you. That Captain Jogues probably is an old-timer, used to working through greenhorns who don't know any better—probably his regular game."

There it was again—greenhorns!

They took down the tent and packed up the outfit, the boys shouldering their share and the men theirs, and started down the trail along Twin Falls River. It was a trail like the one they had followed from Otter Cove and then from the camp in the mid-woods. Where all the woods were so much alike it had been easy to lose their way.

They stopped for lunch beside a little lake,

and then continued down the trail, and a few miles away they came to the mouth of the river, where the trail ended at the top of a high, stony descent near the beautiful cascade that gave the name to the river—Twin Falls.

Drawn up on the beach was a fine skiff. The four launched it, and with Bill and the judge at the oars they pulled across to Otter Island and into the little harbor there. The motor-boat of the two tourists was at anchor off the dock, and Captain McLean, the lighthouse-keeper, was on the dock.

"I wondered if you'd lost yourselves!" he called across to the men. "And where'd you get those youngsters?"

"They've a boat down in Otter Cove," the captain was told. "They followed the Wilson trail around."

"It's a long trail around," the man said.

As it was still early in the afternoon, the two men bade the captain good-by and hoisted the anchor to take the boys down to Otter Cove in search of their cruiser. It was only ten miles down the big bay to the narrow entrance of the cove at Otter Head, and up the cove to the old Wilson main camp, which had been burned, no one knew how.

There swung Captain Jogues's motor-boat just as they had left it. The men anchored near by, and the boys went to the beach where they had tied their skiff. Then they went aboard the motor-boat and invited the men aboard. They showed them the outfit of charts, papers, sporting-outfit of guns, rods, and other tackle.

"Yes, he is a shrewd fellow. He pretended to be a sportsman, and under cover of the papers carried on his smuggling," the judge nodded. "But to-night we'll call down to the Soo and get in touch with the authorities by our wireless, and that 'll clear the way for you boys."

The boys invited the men to stay to dinner, and they were glad to accept the invitation. The boys went to work and got the best meal they could—birds and rabbits and salad and soup—all they could think of as a good dinner, and the men seemed to enjoy themselves immensely.

After nightfall, when the wireless would work clearly, the judge sat down at the instrument and called the Soo. He was soon in touch with the government station there, and shortly he was taking a message from the customs officer. The judge did not tell

what he was sending or taking, but after about an hour he turned to the boys and nodded:

"They want you to come down as soon as you can," he told the boys. "Captain Jogues has sworn out a writ of *habeas corpus*, and the hearing is to-morrow. They need you then. He's been telling that you were the ones who did the smuggling and got him into it. I think it's well for you to go and tell the truth about it."

"To-morrow!" Bill exclaimed, taking out his watch. "Well, it's over a hundred miles to the Soo, but I think this boat will make it all right."

"What! You intend to start to-night?" the men exclaimed in a breath.

"Of course," Bill answered. "The sooner this kind of business is over with the better."

"But it's pretty rough outside yet from the storm," Dr. Wibbert suggested.

"Yes; but it's a dead sea, for the wind has gone down," Miles said. "This boat will ride it all right."

"You boys have the right idea—clean the case right up."

So the boys bade their friends good-by, went over the side, and returned to the cruiser,

and began to take up the anchor. Miles oiled up the motors and turned them over to start them, and then they backed clear of the harbor out into the cove, and thence they headed through the dark toward the narrow entrance out into the open lake. While they were going down the cove the judge sent word on to the Soo that they had started out in the night, and that they would probably make the American Soo sometime the following day.

When they ran into the three-way cross-roads where the bay, the cove, and the lake came together, the heavy swell tossed the motor-boat heavily up and down; but Bill held for the open lake, and a few minutes later they were clear of the ground-swell in the narrow shoal-waters and on the broad, deep waves of the dead sea.

Once in clear water, Bill swung the boat around and headed nearly due south to clear the west end of Michipicoten Island.

Then he held her steady, while the motors throbbed and purred as the boat plunged and lifted on the long swells. Miles sat beside Bill, but the boys did not speak for hours.

They could not speak, for they were thinking of their summer experiences, and how far

and dangerously afield their venture had led them. This was their first entrance into the great world in the effort to earn a living and decide what they should do. The first job that had offered seemed attractive and profitable. Now they found that they had been made the victims of a clever and unscrupulous rascal, and that rascal, caught in his smuggling, was trying to put on them the blame for his own crimes.

They could only picture in their minds the things that were likely to happen on the coming day. They remembered seeing those blue-uniformed men at the Soo with the American shield on their caps, calm and weather-beaten men, seeking to prevent violations of the laws. They would be waiting, the boys knew, when they turned down into the American canal, where they had seen those great, fine ships locking through, carrying their share of the millions of tons of cargoes.

They did not flinch. The thought of turning away did not occur to either of them. They had been taught, each in his own way, to seek the right and do it, and now they had found the right and would do it; but that did not ease the burden on their minds, for

they knew in their hearts that, though they had been innocent of any intent to do wrong, yet they had been the tools of rascals, and it would depend on their own frank avowals whether the law would regard them as merely tools or as accomplices.

All night long they drove down the lake. They passed the head of Michipicoten Island, and then swung around to take the direct course down into Whitefish Bay, Miles taking the wheel while Bill went below and prepared a lunch for all three, for Gyp was there in the wheelhouse, too, wakeful in that long pitching and lunging of the stanch craft.

As long as they might live the boys would never forget that long night cruise, with the starlight sparkling on the sides and tops of the waves, with the sudden flashing of a whitecap on the uneasy water, with the far twinkling of Michipicoten and Caribou Island lights, and out across the deep waters glimpses of steamers which were on their way up or down the lake, the largest of them rolling in that sea. There were troughs in the dead sea so deep that when the motor-boat was down in them the dark menace of the waves on either side shut out the horizon; a moment later they would be balancing on the crest

of one of the swells. They felt that they must not wait for a calmer sea, and this was in keeping with the tumult in their own hearts.

When dawn came they could make out the blue headlands of Whitefish Bay, and they drove on straight toward the head of the river, but not without appreciation of the gathering lights of day—the mackerel sky overhead which caught the red flush of sunlight long before the dark, cold waters beneath caught the light. Then came sunrise through yellow clouds.

When the sun blazed its own path across the heaving waters, they felt relief. They had faced the worst of it, and, whatever might come now, they could look into the matter with clear eyes. As if in unison with their thoughts, the sea calmed down, and when they passed Whitefish Point into Whitefish Bay the sea suddenly flattened into a placid, summer calm.

They swung down into St. Marys River, turned into the narrowing channel, and, passing the range lights, entered the narrow American canal, past the railroad bridge, and with the power shut off glided with slackening speed along the concrete wall of the open lock.

As they came to a stop Miles jumped ashore with a line; but before he had made fast they saw one of the men with blue uniforms and caps start up from his chair at the gate-house. He came toward them, his face plainly in doubt, but as he looked at them he nodded to himself.

"Hello, boys!" he greeted them. "You must have come like scared cats. We didn't think you'd get here so soon. Pretty rough outside, wasn't it?"

"Pretty rough," nodded Bill and Miles.

They had not expected that kind of a greeting.

"I just got here," the man said. "Didn't expect you before noon, anyhow. Well, we'll lock through and go down to the Basin with the boat."

So they locked through the canal and went down to the Basin, where they moored the motor-boat in a launch-slip. The customs officer looked the boat over and sniffed in the cargo cabin.

"He sure did a big business!" he commented. "I know the smell of that medicine."

Then they walked up to the government building, the Custom House, where they were

ushered into a fine office with windows that overlooked the river and the bay. There two men asked questions while a stenographer took down the answers.

They told the whole story, each aiding the other with details. It was almost like being interviewed for a newspaper, except that at the outset they made oath that they would tell the truth.

Apparently Judge Claven had told the officials some things over the wireless, and, also, the men seemed to know many things which the boys had not told any one. The men knew when they went through the Soo, for instance, and one of them, in an aside, remarked:

"You wouldn't have got up the lake if any one had known who you were that day you sat on the bench there by the locks."

"You saw us?" Bill asked.

"Yes; afterward, when we were talking about it, we couldn't imagine why we hadn't asked you questions that day. You just slipped right through our fingers; we never dreamed you'd come this way, and we didn't know you had a boat till the day after you locked up. If you'd come up this side you would have been stopped."

"That's why that fellow told us to go up the Canada side," Bill said to Miles.

So the customs officials rounded out their evidence against Captain Jogues, whose express business had been puzzling and troubling the department for many a day. But the department was not yet through with the boys. They had to remain in the Soo overnight, while the officials received word from Buffalo, where Captain Jogues was held, the *habeàs corpus* proceedings having been put over.

Then the two boys, with one of the officials, went down the Lakes on a steamer to Buffalo, where they were taken into a Federal Court about ten o'clock one morning. There sat Captain Jogues, all humped up in a chair, staring at the floor in front of him, all his jovial spirits gone. Also, there sat the storekeeper from the deserted sawmill town on Lake Michigan, glowering at the floor. There were a number of other men there, some apparently quite well satisfied with the course of events and others evidently unhappy.

Then the proceedings began, and Captain Jogues caught sight of the two boys. His face twitched and his eyes blinked. Then he turned to the well-dressed man by his

side and whispered something. The lawyer looked at the boys, and then stood up and addressed the court. He said a number of things that neither Bill nor Miles understood, till he came to the statement that in view of the conditions and after mature consideration his clients had decided that they preferred to plead guilty rather than undertake a long trial. The lawyer was very adroit in his remarks, conveying the impression that his clients wished to save the government a lot of bother, and also complimenting the court on its leniency toward offenders who saved the government bother.

That ended the case; the men at the reporters' table looked disappointed. Captain Jogues was sent to prison for not less than five years, and his five accomplices received various sentences. The appearance of Bill and Miles in the crowd of witnesses had changed the plans of the defense very materially.

"Well, that's all, boys," the man who accompanied them down from the Soo told them, after some formalities had been complied with. The boys walked out of the United States Court and down the steps into the city of Buffalo, with Gyp at their heels,

looking with startled glances at each new and different noise of horn, whistle, or bell.

The railroad station was near, and there they bought tickets for Utica, where they could get tickets for the R. W. & O., the railroad which would take them to Black River and home. Gyp had to go into the baggage-car.

"I guess we're lucky," Bill remarked, when the train was out in the fields at last.

"So do I," Miles assented. "I don't believe we'll forget our first job."

"Nor I. You know, it used to make me want to talk back when Captain Jogues called me a greeny, but I know better now."

"I, too. I've made up my mind I can't know too much. After this I'm going to read up on things. I'm going to college."

"Well, I'm not. We'd never have learned all this at college. I'm going to travel and read the papers. If you and I'd ever read anything about the tariff and politics and laws, and that sort of thing, which they didn't teach us in school, we would have known the first thing what Captain Jogues was up to. We didn't even dream of what he was up to, expressing things that way across the border."